

mutual enrichment amongst emancipatory currents: engaging with its lack – II

surfacing.

Learning along with the anti-hierarchical buddhist stream 'TIEP HIEN' (1964 –'74)

that initiated a united peace movement against the imperialist war in Vietnam

— Here we explore why beautiful initiatives and currents of engaging with suffering – at the level of self and others, ranging from compassionate sharing and caring to struggle against exploitation and oppression – are always afflicted with growth of serious flaws. By such emancipatory currents we mean the *declared* and organised streams (to give some examples, Marxian, socialist, Gandhian, anti-racist/ dalit/ adivasi liberation, anti-imperialist, engaged Buddhist, anarchist, women's liberation, LGBT people's emancipation, impaired and *different* people's movements, existentialist, post-structuralist...). By emancipatory currents we also mean the 'ordinary' and informal acts, feelings and thoughts of compassion and resistance that like moisture and raindrops, flow in an invisible way, constituting the much vaster *informal terrain of emancipation*. We want to engage with the *lack* that saps the ability of all these currents to deepen their mutual enrichment and resist the *pollution of power* and thus takes us towards the perennial epidemic of co-option into the Establishment.

Key words: Emancipation; politics; organisational problems; degeneration; review; introspection; existential journey; post-structuralism; 'ordinary life'; ethics; compassion and resistance; spirituality; theory; radical philosophy; Marxism; Gandhi; anarchism without adjectives; Buddhism.

Why egotism casts its shadow on our attempt to do beautiful things together – small or large?

Can each emancipatory initiative of the oppressed enrich the other; grow more empathetic, instead of competing and becoming bureaucratic?

Can we feel the interrelatedness between the vast traditions of compassion on one side – sensitivity for a friend or for any hurt being --- 'even' for an insect and on the other side, traditions of rebellion against exploitation – the material and social roots of suffering? Can we create an eye, a vision, a language that can see, describe and examine such interrelatedness as an eco-system of emancipation?

Can we understand why compassion, care and rebellion – instead of enriching each other – so often part ways?

Can we go beyond our passion for The Truth, the world of 'right and wrong', and yet deepen our struggle against compromise and co-option into Domination?

Can we wonder how each – organised and grand or 'unconnected', invisible and tiny – act of compassion and resistance enrich the soil of emancipation and also, at the same time, carries the seeds of Domination?

Can we conceive a tradition where the immense variety of initiatives for warmth and social change connect, more than synergistically – in Interbeing? Can such a

tradition empower us with empathy, insight and togetherness, and help us to overcome the 'epidemic' of competition, conflict and co-option?

“Composed of monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, the Tiep Hien Order never comprised great numbers, yet its influence and effect were deeply felt within their country. Highly motivated and deeply committed, members of the Order and their supporters organised anti-war demonstrations, printed leaflets and books, ran social service projects, organised an underground for draft resisters, and cared for many of the war’s suffering, innocent victims. During the war, many members and supporters died, some from self-immolation, some from cold-blooded murder, and some from the indiscriminate murder of war.”

– *‘Interbeing – Commentaries on the Tiep Hien Precepts*
– Thich Nhat Hanh’– brought out by Parallax Press,
USA, 1987

A note on organisation of the contents:

We begin with our ‘**Preface, and Introduction**’ to indicate what we are trying to express.

We then give long extracts from the pamphlet – ‘**Interbeing – Commentaries on the Tiep Hien Precepts – Thich Nhat Hanh**’ – brought out by Parallax Press, USA, 1987, which begins with an introduction by the Editor, Fred Eppsteiner. For convenience of presentation, we divide this original text in four parts, **PART A, B, C and D**.

Inside each of these parts of this original text, wherever we want to create a ‘window’, to take off and give our reflection, we break, giving a reference number (like ‘see **OUR REFLECTION B-1, B-2** and so on) and if possible a small subheading, and then continue with the original text. We collect and present **our reflections** (serially arranged according to the reference numbers in the original text) at the end of each part of the original text in ‘**APPENDIX –A, B, C and D**. For instance, we have broken the ‘**ORIGINAL TEXT – PART –B**’ in seven places, B–1 to B–7. These are collected serially in ‘**APPENDIX (OUR REFLECTIONS) – B**’ attached to the ‘**ORIGINAL TEXT –PART–B**’. Footnotes are collected at the end of each part.

Finally we have our ‘end’, and a brief reference list of few books we have used. Then there is *resource material appendix* I and II that elucidate a few details regarding the world of Tiep Hien (64-74) – the struggle against war and neo-colonialism in Vietnam, and their later evolution. Then in *resource material appendix* III, we provide a glimpse into the conceptualisation of ‘self’ as envisaged within the perspective of the ‘interbeing’ and eco-systemic way of looking at the world, in radical Buddhist and ecology movement currents since 60s.

Contents:

	<u>PREFACE</u>	3 –
15		
	<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	16 –
44		
	ORIGINAL TEXT – PART- A	
	Introduction	
	By Eppsteiner –	45 – 45
	<u>APPENDIX (OUR REFLECTIONS) –A</u>	46 – 78
	ORIGINAL TEXT – PART- B	
	Introduction by	
	Thich Nhat Hahn –	79
	– 82	
	<u>APPENDIX (OUR REFLECTIONS) – B</u>	
	83 – 120	
	ORIGINAL TEXT – PART- C	
	The Charter - Foundation Principles,	

And Promises for Children-----	121
--- 127	
<u>APPENDIX (OUR REFLECTIONS) - C</u> -----	128 – 149

ORIGINAL TEXT – PART- D

The Sutras – -----	150 – 153
--------------------	-----------

<u>APPENDIX (OUR REFLECTIONS) - D</u> -----	
--	--

--- 154 – 204	
---------------	--

<u>END</u> -----	
-------------------------	--

---205 – 209	
--------------	--

<u>References:</u> -----	
---------------------------------	--

-----210

Resource Material Appendix:

I – Life and Times of Original Tiep Hien -----	
--	--

----211	
---------	--

II – Glimpse of the later day Tiep Hien -----	
---	--

----219	
---------	--

III – Eco-systemic or interbeing way of looking at everything -	
---	--

---- 224	
----------	--

PREFACE

BACKGROUND

Experience of Bengal

For the last one hundred years in Bengal as in so many other places in the world, from Berlin to Hanoi, streams of idealism and compassion have been running strong, hand in hand with rebellion against oppression. Paradoxically, the same has led to a great burnout and tragedy for the human spirit. These would be more corrosive where activism and dreams had blazed most.

From the beginning of the twentieth century in Bengal, whatever is the colour of the flag of emancipation – anti-colonial, nationalist Congress/ Gandhian/, socialist, Marxist and Maoist (since the 50s)– people would run in hundreds of thousands and dance to it. They would make all kind of sacrifices to make the movement a success.

(However, all these rebellions would always cast a shadow. Problems of self-righteousness, authoritarian and sectarian zeal (vanguardism), competition, opportunism and infighting, compromise and degeneration of values would keep emerging. These would keep growing as the struggles became larger and we moved towards victory.)

After a tortuous path, these struggles rose to a crescendo (as it was happening all over India) in the great victory of anti-colonial revolution in the 40s. Soon afterwards, we saw the Congress party – the main leadership of the struggle against colonialism, decay into a despotic regime. This created great disillusionment.

However, people crawled out of their broken dreams and once again rose against this new rule. These rebellions went on and on. Since 1966, people began their large-scale risings against the *Congress rule*, the political leadership of the exploiting classes in India after independence.

In major parts of India, this rebellion against the Congress rule was slow and feeble. Here in Bengal, the enthusiasm of the people was like an ocean in upheaval. It was as if the hour of revolution had arrived. We were also dancing with the radical currents of the 60s that were sweeping the whole world, from California to Milan, Poland to Hungary, Beijing to Vietnam. True to the spirit of the 60s, people were not only rising against the *outer* oppression, but also against compromise, co-option, authoritarianism and despotism of the old leadership of the revolution, *within* the spaces of emancipation. Here in Bengal, it meant rebelling against the old CPI (Communist Party of India, a staunchly idealistic and revolutionary organization till the 50s) – within the upsurge against exploiters/Congress.

But soon, we saw to our shock how this intensity of idealism and radicalism itself became a menacing problem. The groundswell of enthusiasm and power, as it passed from the people to the new revolutionary leaderships, resulted in the conversion of our zeal into a sectarian negative tide creating conflicts and splits. The *Righteous anger* of each *vanguard*, against “all other false flags of revolution”, rose like an evil wind. Then, “Confused armies fought by the night” (– from, **WASTE LAND**, T.S. Eliot) – all earnestly believing in emancipation.

Our political understanding had prepared us to accept and face attacks by the State and its hirelings. In fact, such attacks would unite us more. However, we were nowhere prepared to accept the phenomenon of surfacing

our own comrades hating and attacking each other. Soon, the blood of comrades killing each other created an appropriate soil for the state and its armies to kill and spill the blood of the comrades. People were numbed by utter confusion and shock to their spirit.

The Congress Party rule had been practically overthrown in the uprising of the 66 in Bengal. Nevertheless, our infighting and the resulting demoralization and chaos were possibly the main reason that enabled the Congress to make a comeback. They could launch an all-out slaughter since 1971.

Still the people rallied again. Imposition of the *emergency* by the Congress all over India in 1975 had convinced people around about the metamorphoses of Congress, from emancipatory to despotism. The rebellion became extensive.

By 77, people could finally overthrow the Congress all over India, even in Bengal. However, the new *Communist Party of India (Marxist)* leadership that led this struggle and came to power in Bengal decayed again. Like the earlier times, new rebels were calling for new risings. This time, however, people did not run behind them. There was a great silence instead. The enthusiasm people had shown in Bengal for the past seven decades was no more. Like a paralysing epidemic, an era of depression drowned us all. It seemed that the final decay and *fall* (see footnote 1, given in the end) of our dreams had crushed our innocence, our spirit. For most of us, the era of simple enthusiasm, “Call for revolution” and “correct leadership and path”— in the classic tradition – was dead.

Experience outside Bengal was no different

In Bengal, we had grown up in a tradition where Marxism was synonymous with revolution. As experience was battering down the walls of our Marxist fortress of faith, we began seeing things that we could not have imagined earlier. We began seeing beautiful emancipatory traditions, so different from our pure and correct ones. We also began seeing that these traditions were all going through similarly demoralizing and cyclical journeys.

Thus, the 60s and 70s saw revolts against compromise, co-option and bossism in such far flung traditions like Gandhian and different varieties of socialism, struggles of the subordinate / ‘backward’ castes, Periar’s Dravidian self-respect movement/ Ambedkarite dalit struggles, adivasi struggles like Jharkhand movement. These spirited revolts – Sampoorna Kranti Andolan (Total Revolution Movement), Chaatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini; Dalit Panthers; Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and others – rocked the country in 70s. However, by late 70s and 80s, they were all consumed by the cycle of victory and the subsequent sinking in the quicksand of co-option into State power.

But already a still new generation of rebellions against the co-opted leadership had begun.

We, the compilers of these notes, identify with the journey of this spirit. This spirit, to be found in all emancipatory traditions however different, kept being concerned, kept rebelling despite falling again and again. Now this is going through a long era of fall and depression since the past two to three decades. Yet it keeps groping towards surfacing.

It is clear to us that the old traditions of emancipation, whatever the colour of their ‘ism, program and flag, had some strangely common fatal flaws. They kept suffering from many kinds of problems, variously surfacing

termed vanguardism/followerism, dogmatism, sectarianism, opportunism and so on. Failure to learn and cooperate, arrogance, rivalry and clashes with sister streams within and amongst Marxian, Gandhian, socialist, dravidian/bahujan samaj/rationalist/dalit/neo-Buddhist, adivasi, be it of whatever colour was too common, and afflicted everyone. Ironically, most of these traditions, sooner or later, would inevitably get co-opted into Domination (see footnote 2, given in the end). The faster they grew, sooner the co-option and rot. We find all these problems to be densely interconnected, though often in paradoxical ways. However, in the mainstream theory, there is not even a term, a word for it. These are what we are calling, the pollution of power. These are also the problems of relationships, communication, introspection and its lack – within the terrain of emancipation.

We are no more enthused by the old tradition of 'explanations' for these problems, "They (or we) had bad leaders and bad lines/understanding".

We do not believe the old leaders to be particularly egotistic, insensitive, or unintelligent people. They were mostly driven by sensitivity and commitment, no less than us. They must have been even more authentic and committed. We do not believe people (even leaders) to be just good or bad. We see each person to be grey, with lots of beauty and flaws. We do not also believe that tomorrow we can have some 'finally correct' leaders and line. We do not believe any of the traditions/theory of egalitarian emancipation to be completely right or wrong. We believe each to be grey and to have many beautiful and crucial realizations and also many inadequacies and one-sidedness.

In fact, one reason for our era of silence and depression is the realization that the traditions of our radical theory/movement do not have the appropriate means and ability to go into these problems. With the existing theories and streams of understanding, we can illumine this or that aspect of the problem, recognise flaws of this or that stream of emancipation. But old radical traditions were properly not equipped to deal with those problems systematically, comparatively, holistically, in depth and in interconnection. This lack deprives us of even a language to express our problems, our miseries, so much of our traumatic experiences. It deprives us of the means for sharing and socializing, and also reflecting and introspecting collectively on our agonies. It forces us to thrash around helplessly, as broken individuals, in the sea of our misery. We become isolated, lonely and fragmented. We lament, rave and rant, become silent, depressed; divert, displace and destroy ourselves in so many ways. Though our dreams are broken, somewhere their echoes strive to make us feel this agony for our fragmented dreams. However, the real tragedy will engulf us the day our dreams die, when we become immune or – when we will be unable to take so much meaningless pain. Then the shackles of the 'normal' society with its traps will try to embrace us into its omnipresent prison-house of security and peace.

Here we are not talking about those languages, theories and struggles of emancipation that throw powerful searchlights exposing the systems and processes of exploitation outside. These traditions and languages keep developing in depth and there is a lot of good literature describing them. These searchlights are crucial and essential. But, these are not adequate and sufficient to look inside the spaces of our emancipation and its traditions.

Our fall and depression urgently compels us to introspect deeply. We need to do an audit of how much we have gained and failed in the emancipatory tradition – of the last hundred, hundred and fifty or twenty five hundred years. We need mirrors. We have to be able to look inside the world of emancipatory initiatives – its surfacing

searchlights, paradigms, engines, and relationships. We must look into its mind, its consciousness; its traditions of organizing and acting, relating to each other and society; its conscience – the streams of ethics and values flowing through it; and all its levels of sub-conscious, collective unconscious – whatever we might call it.

For this purpose, we have to patch up whatever we can learn to read from experience and feelings. We have to apply whatever bodies of knowledge that might be needed for our reading, sharing and explorations – political history, psychosocial, psycho-historic, ethical, organizational, and philosophical discourses.

However, we are not announcing or looking for a new theory here. We are rather trying to open ourselves to streams of sensitivity that will change our traditions of relating, feeling and also theorizing. Moreover, we have to examine the block against such introspection, the problem of (lack of) mutual aid and pollution of power.

CONSIDERING THE BLOCK, MOVING BEYOND THE ARROGANCE OF VANGUARDISM

Today here, hegemony savages us, our intimate relationships, everyday life in our 'normal' society and also our miniscule political organization – anti-establishment Marxist or Gandhiite, socialist or anarchist, rationalist/anti-race/casteist, Buddhist or whatever. We are drowned in an ocean of despair. Our optimism has turned into cynicism. But, has the arrogance broken yet? It is uncanny how it lives on, buried even under our broken struggles and dreams!

Throughout the write-up we will be examining the *central paradigm* or faith of the organized traditions of social emancipation, "We who belong to (or even dropped out from) the *organized sector* (Marxian, Gandhian, dalit...) are somehow 'higher' in the plane of consciousness, conscience, morality and activism – as compared to the 'ordinary' (see footnote 3, given in the end) people". However pulverized and fallen is the *movement* or our selves, have we been able to disentangle ourselves from this *above ordinary* status. Have we recognized and accepted our 'ordinary' aspects with peace and humility? Have we been able to create alternatives to this *central paradigm* that we the activists or intellectuals are higher? Without such alternative, how can we avoid getting shackled to the pedestal and hierarchy of 'higher awareness'?

Our experience of the *fall*, the journeys across despair and also towards *surfacing* have helped to accept our ordinariness. These have opened us up to everyone, the world we considered to be beneath our *revolutionary, moral* and *conscious* one. We have realized that our co-option and decay has a lot to do with our failure to respect and learn from *other* sister streams, initiatives, and experiences, organised as well as 'ordinary'.

In these hard times, sharing with the precarious life of everyone, activists, dropouts, 'ordinary', many of us intuitively realized certain things. There is no reason to believe that we the activists and we the ones who experienced the *fall* are any better or wiser as persons than others, in some universal scale. Idealism, emancipatory currents, feelings, acts, or wisdom are of such enormously varied colours (categories) and specificities. How can these be compared and put in a hierarchy? How can there be some universal and standard scale? Similarly, any compassionate feeling or act, caring or resisting discrimination, rebelling, even

momentary and invisible, cannot be insignificant and valueless. It must be having a lasting value in the world of emancipation. Moreover, these *currents*, tendrils and elements of positive streams and values, cannot be put in a hierarchy too. These *positive acts and currents* are not mechanically equal. These are of course different in all sorts of ways, having different role in society and for us. Yet each has a unique value in its place. Their positive connection is crucial to the whole of emancipation.

But what can be the basis of such an outlook that does not belittle but looks with openness and respect towards each *moment of emancipation*? Can it stand on some moralistic, purist and abstract principle? In fact, such realizations run against our *theoretical eye* – *revolutionary* reason and tradition. This eye is capable of seeing only visible entities and connections – that too those that are believed to be belonging to the “correct revolutionary tradition”. We believed ourselves to be ‘mighty rivers’ (may be dried up recently) that we can call the formal, organized or declared sectors of emancipation. We always looked down at and were blocked towards the invisible moisture and mist, raindrops and subterranean water streams and pools constituted by the ordinary good acts of compassion and resistance all around; whom we can call the *informal* terrain of emancipation. We used to think, “How can a conscious, organized, revolutionary deed, an action/activist in the path of Marx or Gandhi or Buddha, be equated with an isolated, ignorant, spontaneous act?” We also thought, “Would not valuing of such tiny acts distract us from giving priority to rebellion of victim that is clear, effective, organised and large scale? Will it not mean falling into the agenda of non-revolutionary *humanism* – that is giving up the project of organising for overthrowing the Establishments of oppression?”

Reality had humbled our *vanguardism* fatally. Rather we came to feel, “If our eyes, *revolutionary consciousness* and theory cannot see in the non-hierarchical way, we have to create new eyes, new awareness. We will no more cut (value) our realizations and feelings according to our *theory/given* wisdoms, but the theory must also flow from our experiences and feelings.”

We rather believe, the split, hierarchy, wall of arrogance between these (what we are calling here) *formal /organised* sectors of emancipation, and on the other side, the initiatives and processes of the *informal /ordinary* terrain, constitute one of the deepest fountainhead of all kinds of blocks and fractures within the emancipatory project. Has not this *bedrock* source, this arrogant way of looking at emancipation (considering ourselves to be the most conscious, the carriers of the burden, the key leadership for emancipating everyone) got something to do with the perennial problem of failure of mutual enrichment to flourish amongst the different streams of *organized and formal* sector of emancipation? After all, there too the problem begins when any one section of the organized sector starts believing that “our work, our understanding, is higher than others”.

In fact, our initiative, realisations and appeal could not have been born, if we hadn't identified and learnt with the 'other', however different and 'ordinary'. Thus, many of us today are people *outside* the spaces of the paralysed and fragmented organised revolution, but who have been preoccupied from ones early age with the problems of hierarchy and exploitation – at all the levels from interpersonal to social.

We, the people from the organised movement, and we, the people outside, may not speak in the same language. Nevertheless, we all deeply feel that strivings for emancipation along with the struggle against Domination and hierarchy must combine compassion and friendship at every moment, at all personal and social levels. We further believe that opposing the legitimisation of power-over-others, even radical, should be

a central quest. Overcoming the hegemony (see footnote 4, given in the end) flowing within us, our egotism – arrogance, insensitivity to *others* is an urgent need.

ABOUT US

We, the compilers of these notes, are amongst the disillusioned generation of radicals of the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s. We are also the people before and after - living through their broken dreams and hard times (in Asia/India, since the 60s and 70s). We are the people who are still dreaming of a better society; learning to open ourselves to the world of the visible and the invisible streams of resistance and compassion that have always been there.

We are not theoreticians. We are not even academically trained in these areas. We do not have the confidence to raise such deep issues in writing. Our claim is only as veterans – either as foot soldiers or dropouts and the broken ones in organised emancipatory streams or as 'ordinary' pedestrians striving for fairness and compassion in the larger society and also struggling for the same within ourselves at an existential level; we are also nurses of the broken ones – 'activists' or 'ordinary' persons, our near ones, any other hurt being.

We have been and are always striving to empathise/connect/communicate and repair telephone lines, across gaps and walls within the world of emancipation. Of all the varieties of experiences and work we have journeyed through, the ones we value most is that of nurturing friendship, empathetic and lateral connections between positive side of persons, all life, initiatives, currents, whatever be their colour. From this experience and vantage point, we identify with those invisible currents that have always wondered why persons around or leaders and organisations (of emancipation) can not respect one another and cooperate more; why the games and ethics of the establishment creep into our beautiful dreams (whatever be their colour) in such invisible but omnipotent ways; why relationships too often sink into competition, resentment and indifference; why streams of emancipation are unconnected with all of life and nature, their creativities, existence and agony; why there is this strange *lack* – silence within the recognised theories of emancipation to introspect to examine these problems. Why till today we have no commonly shared language – orientation, conceptual category and tools to discuss these issues?

Thus, urged by the urgent, widespread, fragmented, helpless groping and wisdoms – that are as yet without any adequate language – at the grassroots, we strongly feel the need to write, to share and connect.

Since ancient times, initiatives and currents of lateral connection and pooling of emancipatory resources – compassion, resistance, understanding and spirituality of all different types – always flowed. A large bulk of it was in the transactions and values in living. These were also cultural and oral streams, diffuse and invisible, and also organised. These processes were striving to reduce egotism, faction-centrism, rivalry and hegemony, build up empathy towards others, and help us become as non-hierarchical as possible. Looking at the negative side of the self and positive side of the other was talked about everywhere. Such a vast informal non-sectarian tradition influenced all declared formal currents – non-theistic, social and spiritual. Initiatives for cooperation at grassroots were extensive in traditions of socialism, anti-oppression and radical spirituality, in

the strivings of the (often burnt-out) veterans — whether in organised streams or in ‘ordinary’ life. Such currents would act as glue, fosterer of bonds and holism. They would cross connect nurture, sensitivity and understanding, heal and sustain the spirit of the invisible world of mutual aid, empathy, caring and resistance, the visible ocean of protest, anti-war, anti-capitalist, democracy from below dreaming and activism. It would be in the spirit of ‘anarchism without adjectives’, the ‘ecumenical’ initiatives and ‘rainbow coalitions’ as it was called in the West, and by so many different names in our East and South. Can we call these ‘libertarian emancipatory without adjectives’? These currents would strive for respecting, empathising, nurturing and learning from each initiative of emancipation, however ‘insignificant, amorphous and voiceless’. We appeal to connect better with the specific aim to celebrate such a dimension of emancipatory networking and discourse.

We should make our purpose clear here.

We believe that there are large numbers of people who feel in a similar way about the concerns presented here. We believe that there are too many people, streams and currents working to reduce our arrogance, insensitivities and blocks, and increase the mutual enrichment amongst currents of emancipation and thus help to struggle against co-option. However, today, such *lateral* connections amongst positive initiatives are feeble, fragmented and mostly invisible. One reason is their lack of a common *language*. They may be speaking in very different ways. Their ways may even sound contradictory to the way we are expressing our realisations. In this situation, they cannot locate and connect with each other, and cannot pool their resources.

We do not have some *theory, philosophy or path* here that we want to propagate. We are not even clear about our own understandings. We are groping for a language to express them. *We do not think that we can even grapple with such extensive problems alone.* Our belief and experience is that when our engagement with such unprecedented, global and multidimensional problems get confined to isolated and small group levels, one is mostly sucked into closed loops, frustrations, breakdowns and despair.

So we are certainly not trying to popularise some ideas that we have ‘discovered’. (See footnote 5, given in the end) Here we are also not trying to debate or convince any friend who feels differently. With the help of our notes, we are essentially sending out calls in the dark, trying to locate like-minded friends with similar concerns, experiences and realisations. Then only we can share and begin to get out of our quagmire. Then we can highlight these problems, network with friends for better understandings and campaigns. So, we share this material *within like-minded friends* — however clumsy and tentative it might be. Thus, we are not trying to go into the recognised nuances and languages for expounding our political thesis. Please see our write-up as informal notes, to search for and share with friends — who are similarly concerned — and to improve connections to raise these issues better.

We wanted to share our concerns in three parts

Our first part is based more on the experiential journey of those who began from the *formal, organised sector* of social change and then saw its *fall* and problems. The second part was to be the similar journey, but from within the *informal terrain*. These would be the dreams and strivings, tribulations, *fall* and realisations of

those who have been preoccupied with emancipatory issues in personal and interpersonal spaces of *ordinary living*. The third part would be examining the issues and elements of language, theory, philosophy and ethics that are needed, to share, describe and examine such journeys.

We felt that we might name the series as, '***mutual enrichment amongst emancipatory currents: engaging with its lack***', the three separate parts being named additionally as:

"an experiential journey: problems of pollution of power within social movements";

"our *fall*; our strivings: the problem seen from the – undeclared, unorganised and informal emancipatory terrain, in ordinary social spaces";

"surfacing: learning along with the radical streams since 60s and the anti-hierarchical buddhist stream tiep hien (1964-74) that initiated a united peace movement against the imperialist war in Vietnam".

Since the last four years, we are writing, editing the first and the third part. We are yet to begin the second part in writing. This work is in the process. It is not complete. It might never get completed. As life goes on; journey goes on; as different kinds of networks and groups come up; as we see old organised movements learn and grow; new ones come up, struggling against the existing mode of production, society and life and other kinds of Domination; as positive and negative, visible and invisible changes happen around us – we and our new friends will try to add more to our understanding.

Our Sources, Our Streams

Here we give an idea of our roots, the experiential memories that keep touching us, the streams that we dedicate ourselves to. We narrate about the streams that form us from two extremes, from the traditions that believe in *conscious organising* and from the currents deep down in the informal and unconscious ocean that surrounds us.

About Kishorie uncle, a friend said:

"He died a bitter and lonely death while this compilation was being put together.

He was our past - that tragic generation where the traditions of emancipation, in the *formal* (the visible rivers) and *informal* terrain (the moisture, mist, raindrops and subterranean water) - like parallel lines - could never meet. Like oil and water, they did not mix even when they were in the same place, flowing through the same person.

"71-76 was the period of white terror in Bengal. Killer squads of police and mafia were marching all around. It was the period when I was visiting Kishorie uncle regularly. He would give me welcome, shelter, food and Rs.10 every time I went there.

Always he would say, ask the same question

surfacing

"When I jumped into the *andolan* (movement) in 1930s we believed that society can be liberated if we can overthrow the colonial rule. Independence did come, but not the liberation that we had envisaged. It was so shocking. Then some people said, "It is economic disparity that causes all the problems. This must be overthrown. You were fools to think that overthrowing colonialism will be enough." So I jumped into the struggle to overthrow capitalism.

Then in 60s, when our struggles were not getting anywhere, some people said, "The idea of overthrowing capitalist exploitation is all right. But you were following the wrong line, bad leaders."

By this time, I was utterly confused. Too many people were screaming, "Ours is the True path." I felt so helpless. I dropped out of the liberation struggles.

In 1930s, I believed that I would see a liberated society in my lifetime. In 50s I again believed it. Now I am old and exhausted. I no more believe that.

But tell me, can I see all those disputes resolved, a correct path and leadership emerging, at least a clear beginning, before I die? Can you, your generation do that? Then I will feel I did not live in vain."

I would be mortified each time he would ask this question. In early 70s I would say, "We are carrying your torch. We are desperately searching for a correct path, to give shape to your dreams. But things are as yet so confusing. We can only try our best and you will surely live to see a beginning."

By late 70s, after the white-terror, my own eyes changed and I was seeing Kishorie Uncle's other side. He was just a friend of my father, not a proper family member. But our 15-20 family members received more compassion and practical help from him than from any *proper* family member! In all sorts of personal, social or medical problems, we used to go to him. He was such a dependable source of warmth and help.

One day I asked him, "Uncle, how many such informal families do you have?" "Ten or twelve" he mused.

Every time I went to meet him, I found lots of old people, old comrades, friends who were feeling rejected, bitter or just lonely. They used that room as a community support system, relating and exchanging views. Many would come everyday.

Gradually, my vision of K. uncle as a burnt-out dropout was changing. I could see him as an excellent non-patriarchal non-paternalistic alternate family and support community builder. Whether someone was 60 years his junior or upper or lower class, or women, he gave them equal respect, provided them with open mind and full attention and received them with lots of warmth and empathy. I could see his life as a struggle against up-climbing and consumerist egotism. Uncle was building a truly alternate space, enriching counter-hegemonic currents.

He lived his whole life as an instinctive down-climber. After 60 years in politics, parties and unions (he was senior organiser of union in the concern where he was employed), he had only one cot and a shared chair. No post, cadres, power, charisma, worshippers, honour or 'proper' family. Of course he had created lots and lots of horizontal friendships.

His own family – his brothers and others who loved him were in high places. They kept on trying to pull him out of what they felt was a supportless and poor life. They wanted to give him 'proper' family care. However, K. uncle never budged. "These people here have always looked after me. They will feel let down if I leave. I am

comfortable enough. Also, so many people use this place for company and comfort. To some of them, it is the only oasis in a lonely and egotist world. How can I leave them in the lurch?"

In 1980s I began to see his life as a gentle but deep stream where anti-egotism, empathy and warmth, anti-power/exploitation were giving life to each other. It was a spiritual current that was so tangible, so clearly felt.

However, no one told him that what he was doing was worthy and revolutionary. This idea was not yet born. Therefore, he too could never see this. When I told him this, he would loudly protest:

"What I am doing is nothing. It is what anyone does to pass time. I am a dropout and a failure. I could not continue in the struggle. People come here because they have nothing to do. I failed as a revolutionary. I could not do anything else because I did not have any talent."

Thus, he was convinced about the futility of old social liberation traditions. Most of his comrades had changed into stinky bosses or broken rejects. He even saw the futility of the traditional family system. He kept talking about family being moulded by greed and consumerism, how it is creating such value crisis and emptiness that old people who are not smart enough feel rejected.

Nevertheless, he too was a victim, who did not have the eye to see the alternatives even the ones he was practising. So he could not see, link up and get help from alternative traditions. He could not even see much meaning in his own life.

He was drowning in our own self-created misery and one-sided concept of revolution. He became pathologically bitter. Throughout 80s and 90s he would rant and rave about the rampant consumerism, corruption of power in politics and egotism all around. All my attempts to show him alternatives would remain futile.

Finally, the promoters (real estate business) broke up his mess and he was uprooted from his *life support system*. Bitter and broken, he got moved into a Freedom fighters' old age home. He tried to fight against the rampant corruption there. But he could not dislodge the lumpens supported by the ruling party.

He was so bitter and weakened that he could not write post cards - that he used to write in hundreds - earlier. He could not maintain contacts with his friends. He became so lonely before end - something that had never happened in his 87 years.

He died a few years ago. However, his memory, his quest, dilemma, his laughter and his despair, warmth, smell ... is so alive, so vibrant, like an aroma in the air. His streams respond so sensitively to us, our despair and our creativity, also today. Are these streams not conscious, an entity in themselves? Has he, as a stream flowing through our social mind, ended?

About Baby, a friend said

I touched her shoulder. She shrieked. I was scared. I jumped back to run away. I felt she would hit me. She looked mad. Her clothes were stinking, and her skin was full of greasy dirt. I had touched her to ask if she needed any help. But now I thought I did a mistake, she looked too scary and hostile. Sitting in the middle of the roadside, she was staring with her inquisitive eyes at the people and the traffic around her.

"I am sorry", I said and turned my back to escape. I started walking in haste. What was that? Something heavy, I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was she, "Why are you running away, are you scared of me? Don't be scared. I love to make friends. I do not harm people. I have many friends very much here in Connaught Place. I am called Baby", she said. I was stunned, ashamed, but she kept smiling at me. It was her this friendly gesture that got us together. And then, we met and met, year after year.

Baby with her stooped shoulders, chronic tuberculosis, a street woman, whom people called as *pagli*, and *ganji*, was a hidden surprise for so many of us. Each time I would go to Connaught Place, she would introduce me to a friend of hers. Her friends varied from sale-girls to officers, to women in prostitution, pimps, to women begging on the streets, vendor women, panwalaas, shoe-polish-men, alcoholics, drug addicts and peddlers. She would see to it that we all get to meet each other, when possible. She enjoyed her networking.

I thought I was very concerned about her. I was helping her. For me she was not a friend but someone I wanted to help. Someone who was intellectually lower and needed my paternalistic care and protection.

I have always been scared and timid while crossing roads. She would, when together, always pull my hand and make me run on the road. I would fear she might come under the car, so I would try to hold her back. She would laugh, mock, force me to run along with her.

She wanted to know more about me and my people. She would try to visit homes of her friends. Each time she would meet me, she would ask me how I was, how was my family, my friends. She would name each person I had told her about or introduced her to and ask about his or her well-being. She hardly had any other ambition than to make friends, relate and get connected to the friends of friends. She was so full of this spontaneity in relating that it left her little energy and concern for her physical hygiene, well-being, and survival.

Baby would usually treat me to a coke. She would be angry if I refused. The little money she earned and could save by mopping shop floors she would spend lavishly on her friends. Most of her money she would spend on her alcohol and drugs. She was a bohemian in her own way – a spontaneous bohemian. Wanted to be free. Hated any kind of restriction or force. Had left her home at quite an early age, when she was married to a man she did not like. She came on the streets of Connaught Place, never to go back home to depend upon. But yes, her commitment to her people – sisters, brother, father (who was her second father), sister-in-law and other basti people (even those who were not her friends) was just marvellous. She would like to ask everyone, how they were and if she could be of any help. She was not a heroine. She was ordinary. Hardly could be of any help to people around. But would do to her utmost. She would always take me to her home when there was a crisis around her people. She was there each time to support them, to create support for them.

I hardly knew much about her life. I could not understand her with my conditioning of a 'normal' and paternalistic culture. I usually felt sorry for her. Her 'dirty' life was scary to me. I wanted to help her and protect her. Many a time I got her admitted to a T.B. hospital. Each time she would somehow manage to get out of it. She would never complete her treatment.

She was pregnant when once I left her in a progressive women's shelter home. But here she felt suffocated and caged. She was accused of peeping out of the window, and looking at men. She was also accused of lying and going out. There was a conflict between Baby and the authorities. And just in few months she was asked to leave. Smilingly, Baby reached her street in Connaught Place again, and once again in the central park began to spend her afternoons and evenings.

I was always nervous. I wanted her to live. I was always insecure. I thought she would die. I requested her to stop drinking alcohol, take her proper treatment. I wanted her not to be used by men. I knew she was being raped many a time. Her sexual life was an enigma for me. I also knew there were some men she enjoyed her sexuality with. She was strange, could not communicate her own agony. I could not understand much of her *language*. Was she a little 'retarded' or 'mad'? I do not really know. She looked different, not one like us. Her most sides were very sane. She was of her own kind. Her inner world was alien to me.

What I can never forget is her walking along with me till my bus stand (from her block – F to the Shivaji stadium bus stand). Many times in a year, we walked on that path together. I feel her presence when I am walking through those blocks of Connaught Place. She died three years ago of meningitis. Her chronic tuberculosis did not leave her. We all wanted her to live. She did not want to die. But neither did she want to change her life style, or even compromise. This is what she was.

Each time she was admitted in the hospital, she would make at least half a dozen of friends. But this time, her last hospitalisation, she was just unconscious. At times, she would call for her little son in her semi-conscious state, whom she had taken the decision to bring up along with Chanda. Chanda, an old friend of hers, lived with her mother (the *pan-walia*) on the pavement of Connaught Place. For years, they all lived and slept together under one blanket. Baby and Chanda were bringing up this son together. Baby had given her daughter for adoption and her three children had died.

Now, when Baby is no more, Chanda and her mother are bringing up Baby's son on their own. Chanda supported and took care of Baby for a long time. She and her mother would go out of their way to help her. Every time Baby was too sick, they would, strangely withdraw their support, blaming her to be irresponsible and incorrigible. Baby's other friends on the street, the shoe polish and the alcoholic men, all would choose to fail to support this 'good for nothing' person (a useless body) in her crisis. Yes, Baby was incorrigible and could make anyone tired. But did she deserve a lonely and friendless death? Ultimately she went into coma, and one morning it all ended.

But did it really end? Her being; her tradition; her smile; her friendship and warmth; it continues to live in me, in us and in the stream of life.

She hardly ever had more than two dresses or any other personal property. If you gave her one extra dress she would somehow lose the older ones. Baby was someone who lived friendships, nurture, non-accumulation, non-ambition in her being. But this concept or language was not available to her. I tried to tell her what she meant to life and emancipation. But all these values, concerns, authentic living hardly meant anything to her. She lived. Her being lived. Her life became her voice; a voice, I wonder, she ever listened to.

But what I wonder most is, whether she even internalised the precious life of sharing that she actually through her personhood was spreading around.

Baby died alone in the hospital ward. There was no one with her at that time. “We were tired taking care of her”, a justification I could give to myself. Myself, my friends, her friends, all of us had left her alone. She was hardly anything to any of us. I would find difficult to even touch her sick body. I did not touch her. She was usually ‘dirty’ and ‘stinking’. That morning we saw her as a ‘thing’ lying in the hospital mortuary. Tied up as a bundle in a white cloth, nothing of her to be seen. It was painful, I was guilty, but still could not touch her.

Some recurrent questions that keep troubling me are – why was she so alone and supportless? Why our eyes failed to see her as a part of the formal or the informal terrain (of emancipation)? The informal terrain, her friends, Chanda, the panwallas, the shoe polish men, the man who claims to be her son’s father, myself, all got tired of her, on the other side, the formal sector never recognized her existence.

Why was her life seen as so meaningless? Did her life have anything to do with emancipation? If yes, then what status was she given amongst the emancipatory streams? Normal society, of course, had turned her impairments into sources of oppressions; deprived her of opportunity, support, security, dignity, and meaning; treated her cruelly, as trash. But, what about the emancipatory streams? Why there was none of us to support her and she had to die so alone, so loveless? Supporting a friend – a needy, an invisible comrade like Baby – does this not have a symbiotic relationship with the struggle against Domination?

The memories of Baby’s life keep on goading me, “Why can’t we imagine an emancipation that would nurture and give meaning to Baby’s life, and why is it that we fail to see so many currents of activism flowing through her life, that her life in itself embodied so many valuable aspects of activism?”

Baby’s story interrogates/confronts us from the side of the hindmost. However, that is not the only reason for remembering Baby here. Her entire existence points out to the fact that “Isn’t there a Baby in all of us?” Her life exemplifies how currents of defying hegemony, norms, connecting alternative streams flow via people like her in the terrain of the hindmost.

— **Kolkata, Delhi – 2001–2004**

surfacing

In these notes, we seek and celebrate the surfacing ...

The journey from dreaming and flying, from *falling* and breaking... to surfacing

We dive into the deep sea, the sea of our *fall*
with both the fear of uncertainty and loss
as well as the hope of recovery and reparation

These notes are an attempt to envision the surfacing

Of

the invisible, the unheard and the unacknowledged potentials
and interrelationships
surfacing of the capacity of mutual enrichment
between currents and streams of resistance,
the propelling force of introspection
and the strength of compassionate thought and action

It is an exploration into the deeper spaces

within the psyche and relationships
within and between persons,
organized emancipatory streams
and the ocean of the informal terrain of emancipation

We celebrate the surfacing of compassion and resistance

as companions struggling against Domination
the surfacing of humans, animals, insects, plants...
as together in diversity
the surfacing of the layers of the hindmost
against hierarchy ...
the surfacing of the invisible streams
Those shape our being; our connections; our movements
the surfacing of the complexity & the grey

The surfacing of rising and falling,

together contemplating on co-paining, connecting, co-living
the surfacing of nurturing the spring in the desert
the surfacing of the ocean of diversity,
the coming together of the spring...

FOOTNOTES FOR 'PREFACE', GIVEN IN THE END (FOR CONVENIENCE IN E-MAILING)

1. We *fall* when we accept being forced or tempted or seduced to compromise and think and do acts we would otherwise consider unethical and ugly. We also *fall* when we see our ethical, authentic, beautiful desires and dreams, our faith in our own self and our peers beginning to crack. We *fall*, when we believe in and identify with something (ideas, theory, authority, stream, movement & so on) as beautiful, as the truth, and then it collapses on us. We might *fall* in many a way in specific spheres in our lives.

We may react to our fall negatively. Negative currents can sweep us when we are weakened and traumatized by our fall. We can 'heal' in a way so as to give up our idealistic dreams, become 'realistic' – cynical and closed to the positive side of emancipatory streams, become hardened and 'normal' citizens. We may also encounter our fall to connect with positive currents. The shock of the fall may crack up some of our ego blocks, we may learn to see the negative currents flowing in us, learn to struggle against our anchors "we are the truth and the best".

2. By the word 'Domination' in this write-up (with D in capital) we will mean systems, structures, Institutions, and traditions of power and domination.

3. By the word 'ordinary' and 'ordinariness' in our write-up we will conceptually mean: every person, act, feeling or emotion however 'ordinary' (from the 'radical' point of view), has many positive currents and characteristics, as well as the negative ones. In the same way, we the radical ones have negative currents and characteristics flowing through us all, whether we are Marx or Buddha or Gandhi. We appeal here to meditate upon the reality that these negative and positive aspects can never be compared in some absolute scale, and so, each of us is 'ordinary', fallen, and also 'extraordinary'. Also, our 'status' keeps changing from moment to moment, in different circumstances.

4. 'Hegemony', in our write-up will mean:

All types of drives, values, desires... in our psyche, relationships and society/traditions empower the oppressive systems – of whatever types. Though all these values — *streams of hegemony* — come to us via the oppressive systems and are organised by Domination, nevertheless it also happens the other way round.

5. We find ourselves in a demoralized, fragmented and desolate situation. Here, there is little chance to talk about the ethical, social, philosophical problems of mutual enrichment of emancipatory streams. Therefore, wishing for such opportunity, we have made many speculative comments in this write-up, in order to exchange and air our wonderings.

INTRODUCTION

What is that we dream of? A world of love, equality, friendship and freedom, a system that stands on the belief of the collective strength and also respects the uniqueness of each individual? But then what debars us from creating such a world?

Identifying with the struggles against oppressed, millions in the past have dreamt of an ideal world and in a bid to actualise their vision, struggled relentlessly against the negative systems, with themselves and made innumerable personal sacrifices. They rebelled against the negative structures and traditions, worked for equality, classlessness, co-operation and collectivity. In consequence, in several parts of the world, they even bore some fruits of their efforts.

We believe that no struggle can be authentic until and unless the victims themselves, raise their voice and assert their rights. What we are questioning here is not to reduce such struggles and revolts but to understand the pervasive hegemony that has been suffocating these movements.

When we review the past in its entirety, we encounter a painful historical reversal. We are compelled to confront the question – *what ultimately became of our visions?* How was it that in striving for an egalitarian world, unaware even to ourselves, we created new powerful hierarchical parties, communities and nations; and contributed in the consolidation of a vicious cycle of Domination, competition and nationalism? Why was it that we have nowhere succeeded in dealing with power/hierarchy inside our selves, communities and organisations (it only changed hands, people and status)? Before our ideal regimes became totalitarian, were we free of the seeds of totalitarianism and traditions of ‘normalcy’ – in our minds? Why, under the garb of Ideology and pragmatism we justified those very processes and aspects, which we had also questioned and then fought against? When small groups or oppressed communities become victorious in their emancipatory struggles, why hierarchies within them grow and why do they too get co-opted into the establishment and its power games? And, why are various forms of pollution of power always the bane of our lives inside and amongst the emancipatory initiatives and organisations – small or large, invisible or visible? Everyone believes – it is the “other people’s problem”, and because of this or that reason, “We will remain uncontaminated”. But, everyone has a *fall!*

Today for us all, these questions have become very significant. In our movements, we have fought against State and economic power, feudalism, colonialism, casteism, patriarchy, capitalism, and so on. We have understood power as vested within institutions and established structures. The Marxists amongst us, base their ideology on class analysis. We located rightly the sufferings caused by economic exploitation and poverty as the genesis of the largest dimension of oppression, and zealously attempted to alter it. However, paradoxically, as we got more concerned, conscious and organized in resisting one aspect of Domination and as we created beautiful victories, we got trapped somewhere and got co-opted within the system and its traditions of expansionism, egotism, competition, hierarchy, de-humanization. In concentrating to eliminate the power outside, we silently allowed the power/domination within to continue to exist and even grow. (Footnote, 1, given in the end of ‘Introduction’)

surfacing

Why, after all this struggle and achievement stated above, we still kept falling and breaking?

At different times, too many of us did raise these questions. One-dimensional answers like “those leaders were reformists, bad, their Marxism was poor”, would often block us from asking these questions systematically and holistically. Deeper questions for self-analysis and introspection also could not grow because we did not have a proper *language* to express and socially link up these concerns. Thus, these remained like formless smog, mournful, suffocating and exasperating.

Without being able to pose the problem and examine their roots, we attempted once again to root-out the degeneration of power “within”, by the use of even more powerful means. This has eventually led to our own failure to learn, utter ineffectiveness and *fall*.

Today our minds are numbed by the unbridled *war dance* of US militarism and ‘free’ market. However, can we imagine today’s world without the earlier devastating collapse and co-option of *party socialism* (of all shades – social democrats, Gandhian, nationalist, marxists) from London to Berlin, Moscow to Hanoi to India? In fact, concerned people (though not the usual leaders and theoreticians) always said, “Imagine what would have happened if the various initiatives and streams of emancipation had respected each other, co-operated instead of competing. If they could have stuck to their roots of egalitarian compassion, would not the world have gotten much better long ago?” Thus, the past has posed before us many vexing, yet profound, questions.

This write-up is mostly about *us*; the living witnesses to our *risings* and *fall* – people who continue to experience the pain and agony of such historical reversals, to whose growth they had so selflessly contributed. It is mostly about our experience in India — Marxists in Bengal and Kerala, anti-imperialists (old as well as new), Gandhians, and all those who identify with the socialist streams that had emerged all over India and also the rebellions of the dalit, adivasi, *bahujan* (all the castes subordinated under brahmanism) /rationalist /dravidian, women and all other oppressed.

It is also about the experience of living through the hard times of the 70s to the 90s in India.

This write-up is also about *us* – those who grew up outside any organised movement, but who from our very childhood or afterwards were idealistic, dreamt of a beautiful world, were disillusioned and have been preoccupied with questions like:

Why most of us are so deprived, so shunned, so much in pain and yet immune? Why is our world so full of discriminations and hierarchies? Why these negative systems have a powerful aura that overpowers all of us? Why we the powerless, striving to be empathetic fall short of empathy and fail to make better friends with each other? Wishing to make friends and enhance one another, why and how do we reduce each other? Why loving is so difficult? Why aloofness and indifference have become almost synonymous with authenticity? Why we cannot be empathetic and yet authentic as people? Why is taking care of a broken near one or anyone else considered valueless or on the other side why is the same considered as selfless and great - why caring is not a part of our being? Why helping a hurt insect/any being is considered silly? Why we forget to see the crushed insect under our foot? Why is it

that in wanting to feel connected with the pain of others, we end up with an experience of immunity and apathy instead? What creates in us the aspects of indifference and self-centredness? Why is there such a discrepancy between what we are and what we want to be?

As we engage with these questions, many of us get involved in an interpersonal (and small group level) activist quest. A few amongst us, believing that nothing can improve unless the whole system is transformed, also join the larger “emancipatory movements” of our time. But most of us, whether inside or outside the “movement”, eventually begin to experience a sense of disillusionment, feel disintegrated and fall into a state of limbo. Living in the limbo, some of us also begin to understand that though we mostly *fall*, are lost and get manipulated by the system but yet the desire in us to strive for a better world, egalitarian co-operation, friendship, empathy continues to live somewhere. Our resistance despite all hurdles is our life force, but these obstacles are complex, nuanced and deep-seated – to see through and resist them becomes a part of our struggle.

Thus the childhood quest, “Why we can’t be more empathetic, friendly and relate with each other equally”, meets the question of the concerned activist who while seeing the *fall* of the *organised emancipation* wonders, “Why our different organisations can’t retain their compassion and make better friends and co-operation as they grow?” These anguished concerns seemingly emerge in distant spaces without connection. Nevertheless, they from complimentary directions light up something that is invisible to mainstream radical theory but of core concern to us. Only some amongst us, in this *time of the plague* engulfing our world, have been lucky enough (due to vicissitudes of circumstances) to hang on to our original quest to some extent. We all feel impelled to engage with questions, such as: -

Why egotism casts its shadow on our attempt to do beautiful things together – small or large?

Can each emancipatory initiative of the oppressed enrich the other; grow more empathetic, instead of competing and becoming bureaucratic?

Can we feel the interrelatedness between the vast traditions of compassion on one side – sensitivity for a friend or for any hurt being --- ‘even’ for an insect and on the other side, traditions of rebellion against exploitation – the material and social roots of suffering? Can we create an eye, a vision, a language that can see, describe and examine such interrelatedness as an eco-system of emancipation?

Can we understand why compassion, care and rebellion – instead of enriching each other – so often part ways?

Can we go beyond our passion for The Truth, the world of ‘right and wrong’, and yet deepen our struggle against compromise and co-optation into Domination?

Can we wonder how each – organised and grand or ‘unconnected’, invisible and tiny – act of compassion and resistance enrich the soil of emancipation and also, at the same time, carries the seeds of Domination?

Can we conceive a tradition where the immense variety of initiatives for warmth and social change connect, more than synergistically – in Interbeing? Can such a tradition empower us with empathy, insight and togetherness, and help us to overcome the 'epidemic' of competition, conflict and co-option?

We want to reflect, imagine and introspect upon such problems collectively

To highlight our problems, first we describe the field of our special concern – the whole *world* of emancipation. Why this expression *world*? Many friends see emancipation as the evolution around a single *True stream* – that of Marx or Gandhi or Ambedkar or even anarchist. They believe, “Well, there are problems with this stream, but is there any better alternative to this Path/tradition? So this *best stream* needs only to be understood, enriched and practiced *correctly* – to take us to victory.” We on the other side are trying to talk to friends who feel that, the tradition of emancipation is multi-coloured, without any *centre*, varied and vast – far beyond our comprehension. It includes all these (classic streams associated with Marx, Gandhi, Phule, Peryiar, Ambedkar and so on) surely but much more. There are these great *rivers* of visible streams, but also mist, rain, subterranean water pools and rainforests – far larger, invisible and diffuse processes. Thus, this whole terrain of emancipatory moments, feelings, struggles and reflections is more a *world*.

Then, we offer a way of classifying the world of emancipatory reflections and theories. We can describe (classify) theories/conceptual tools (paradigms and traditions of thoughts) of the *world of emancipation* in three aspects, levels or dimensions. We are calling them the three *domains*. These domains are for describing and reflecting upon the same *continent*. Thus, these are not separate but each is enmeshed in and creating others. Note that this classification is arbitrary, vague and inadequate. It is just a way to light-up theory from our point of view.

The first domain throws light on systems of oppression that works from *outside* on the oppressed, their structures and how they work. Some instances:

Since the 1850s, Marxist / socialist streams were throwing light on the economic mode of production (capitalism), its State-politics – that causes the largest bulk of suffering and destruction of humans, all beings and Nature. Then, the movements against despotism, war and for democracy / justice from below were exposing all sort of coercive authoritarian rules. Anarchists were exposing how Statism, *verticalist* (top-down, power-pyramidal) processes of the authority were creating and enhancing the politics of oppression. Gandhians, currents within struggles of adivasis (indigenous people) since long, and then recently, the streams of deep and radical ecology (Footnote, 2, given in the end) are exposing the pathology of centralist (Statist and capitalist) development processes. Anti-colonialist streams were exposing how exploiting classes of the *metropolitan* nations plundered and destroyed the toilers and their resource base in the *periphery*. Bahujan / draavidian / dalit and anti-racist streams were exposing how brahmanism / casteism in India and racism around the world were constructing our oppressive 'civilisation'; feminism was unveiling how patriarchy existed and operated as a bedrock dimension everywhere in our society. The womanist movement, besides questioning patriarchy, were going beyond to

question the notion of colour, class, anthropocentrism (seeing humans as the centre and the highest pinnacle within Nature) and much more. Anti-establishment currents within the hippy, bohemians in the west, *subaltern*, baul, sufi and other rebel religious traditions in the east were exposing the invisible structures, hierarchy, order, and meritocracy of the so-called 'normal' society.

Then, the second domain

Here we ask questions like, why the oppressed cannot struggle against the system even when they can identify the system to be their oppressor. Why it is so easy for the system to make the oppressed work for their own oppression, make them compete and even fight each other? Why it is much more difficult for the streams against oppression to mobilise the oppressed?

Diverse streams of socialism, from Marxist to anarchist, had spread rapidly amongst the European toilers and other people in the beginning of the 20th century. For instance, amongst the working class of Germany, marxist/socialist ideology had become the main organising force. But authoritarian and capitalist forces, nationalism or fascism, defeated or co-opted them in Germany, Spain, Italy, Central and Eastern Europe. In Russia Marxists were victorious but eventually they degenerated. All these failures and *falls* since the 20s, led to deep introspective questioning. We saw the beginning of the growth of *critical* radical streams of understanding, development of appropriate theories and conceptual tools in Europe since the 20s and 30s. This is the terrain that we can call the second domain.

This domain tries to understand problems like how people internalise systems of oppression easily and deeply rather than a mindset of emancipation; how the human mind is largely *non-conscious*, *irrational* and incessantly formed by the whole of society and how these parts can block or overrule, manipulate and construct the *rational*. This domain would explore the processes of *hegemony*. This includes the *seeds and soil* of the external structures of oppression within the dominated and much more (Footnote, 3, given in the end).

After the Freudian breakthrough, they could see it in our daily, personal, family and community life; in the terrain of our sexuality, childhood, family; the traditions that shape our emotions, spontaneity, desires, dreams – the various hidden levels of our individual, interpersonal, cluster and social psyche. The second domain would examine, how the oppressed become a party to the processes that construct consent, valorisation of and servility to hierarchy and egotism – all proclivities of our psyche and conditionings of Domination within the oppressed and the whole of the society.

The second domain also studies the processes of *counter-hegemony*. These are the visible and invisible patterns/currents, feelings and acts of non-hierarchical mutuality, love and compassion, resistance and rebellion, in personal and community life of the oppressed, in all the levels of our conscious, sub-conscious and unconscious. These are always opposing the processes of hegemony.

This domain includes the streams associated with names like the Frankfurt school, Wilhelm Reich, Eric Fromm, Erik Erikson and other psychoanalytic and also critical traditions like Gramsci and so many others.

This second domain, along with the first, grew explosively since the 50s. Then, each new social movement was throwing a searchlight of a new colour on the construction of Domination in the outer and also the inner surfacing

space of society. These included anarchist, existentialist, social *critical* Marxists, anti- (neo) colonialists, womanist to post-structuralist and others (in the west).

In India (and possibly in Asia too), these considerations began to emerge in the radical discourse only since the 80s, nearly fifty years later. Then too these were feeble in comparison to the critical streams in Europe.

A few reasons for this gap and lack can be speculated.

Firstly, in India, we were under the despotic colonial rule till the middle of the 20th century. Here, the era of mass popular acceptance/victory and subsequent decay of socialist traditions, and then the rise of authoritarian and fascist-like streams – the necessary experiential soil for the birth of critical reflection – happened much later. Only during 1950s and the 60s we saw the degeneration of our anti-colonial/nationalist liberation. Then, we in the 70s and the 80s saw the victory and the subsequent decay of a large variety of socialist streams – from Gandhian to Leninist and Maoist - also bahujan, dravidian, dalit and adivasi streams of emancipation.

Strangely, despite all of this, we could not critically look into the problems within the (oppressed) people. One obstacle to such critical reflection was our deep paternalist culture cutting across all tendencies of emancipation, all over Asia. Call it Confucian (in China), call it brahmanical (in India); it has been one chief tradition spawning empires and despotism even in the villages for more than three thousand to twenty-five hundred years. It was a culture that always conditioned us to look at the oppressed as children – simple, pure, ignorant and leaderless – to be led to emancipation by good fathers/leaderships/education. This perspective predisposes us to positions like: “if the revolution does not happen, or it fails, it is the fault of the Father/leader – their corruption or wrong line, the cadres and the masses – the children are nowhere responsible. We only need, a proper leader, Gandhi, Lenin Peryiar or Ambedkar to lead us to victory.”

But by the 1980s we had to face the stark reality that the oppressed too have significant problems inside them. Why is it that all kinds of commercial and other vested interest groups find it much easy to organise and mobilise the toilers (and that too against their interest) rather than sincere socialists? Why patriarchy finds it so easy to make women compete with women rather than co-operate for their emancipation? Why it is so easy to make sections within the toilers fight with each other on lines of caste, religion authoritarianism, communalism, gender and economic interest? Why misinformation by the vested interest is so successful, while our good information campaigns are not? Of course, opportunists and communalist leaders will do their dirty work, but why do the people follow them so easily as compared to the voice of reason and even their own rational interest? What is that *soil* within the psyche of the toilers, they as individuals, clusters or communities that make them resist but so often become an easy prey to oppressive norms?

Since the 80s, however late and slow, these concerns of the second domain are increasingly emerging in India – as unofficial currents around our Gandhian, socialist, Marxist (Footnote, 4, given in the end) and Ambedkarite traditions. (Footnote, 5, given in the end)

Need for a *third domain*

Why do the oppressed, when they break out of their passivity and ignorance, when they mobilise get so easily divided, diverted and co-opted? Why even the 'conscious' organisers, those supposed to have broken free of the conditionings by the system, too often suffer a similar fate?

There were grave problems of *pollution of power* and ethics that incessantly corrupted our struggle for emancipation. The storehouse and streams of understandings, theories and conceptual tools (that we are calling the first and second domain) were not fully adequate and appropriate to explore these problems.

Our crisis, its depth, demands that we get out of the mindset of looking at problems from just within the perspective of one of the streams of emancipation. We need to create a broad and panoramic view. We have to explore the problems of co-option into Domination and lack of co-operation amongst all types of sister initiatives. We have to feel with and also look inside each of the streams of compassion and cooperation, resistance and consciousness – visible and organised or invisible, informal, transitory and diffuse. They may be speaking in incomprehensively different languages. They may not even believe themselves to be a part of some emancipatory tradition. We need a space, a tradition to link up such cross-links/communications and reflections. This is the terrain that we are calling the third domain.

The third domain also means to learn to introspect. It requires that we need mirrors to look within ourselves. This means looking within, examining the strengths and also the problems inside the engines, searchlights and eyes – the organising of the consciousness of social activism. This means examining the anatomy, the invisible levels, the *sub-conscious and unconscious*, of the processes that organise the heart, the empathy, ethics, spirituality, values – the conscience – of our emancipation. This means examining the so-called subject or *agency* that creates the visible and organised struggles and radical theory. We must use whatever it takes, philosophical, political, ethical, psychological, sociological, psycho-historical streams and so on, as they are called in our compartmentalised knowledge, to examine the underpinnings of each emancipatory tradition. We also need to look at the murky eddies – games of Domination and egotism behind each spark of compassion, resistance and reason that keeps flowing in our everyday moments.

This third domain is as yet mostly invisible, without its own lights and even without any name. Most organised radical traditions believed, “We only have one correct mainstream and that is ours. Then, there are many deviant side-streams within our tradition. There are also other streams outside our tradition, the bad, wrong and ineffectual ones. There are also the ‘ordinary’, unconnected and unorganisable compassionate and rebellious activities that people just do spontaneously, activities that do not concern us. If this is the case then, where is the *world* of emancipatory activism?” “What are those *multiplicities of streams and rain drops and mists* that we are talking about?”

One reason for not seeing this *third domain* is that we have always seen it as a part of the *first domain*. It was believed that where, what and how things are going wrong on the road to emancipation could only be perceived by “our correct tradition/theory”.

For instance in the Marxian tradition, consider the faith in the omnipotent truth of *revolutionary theory*. This resulted in believing that, “All the degeneration within movements arise as the people therein are stuck to *wrong*

theory, bad leadership". Thus each Marxist stream would see all the other non-Marxist streams degenerating "because their theory was not *scientific / Marxist*". Thus, they would say, "Gandhians get co-opted because their theory is unscientific; weak in seeing the power of the exploiting classes; and the necessity of organisation, struggle and leadership of the toilers". Then, within the Marxist tradition, each stream would see and explain the degeneration/failure of others as, "Their understanding of Marxism was wrong/ their leadership bad".

In a similar way Gandhians believed that, "Marxists get co-opted as their theory is wrong; they do not understand the role and power of centralist development model (that emerged in the west); violence; the need for inner/spiritual change ... etc."

Thus, each tradition and stream of emancipation kept blaming the other. However, the question that none of them could pose is, "Why does the entire spectrum of Marxist and also the Gandhiite, or the dalit or any other tendency begin to get co-opted the moment it grows a little larger?"

Standing in the *third domain* we can say: "wrong or one sided theory or bad leaders do create bad struggles but this is only one part of the story". We must also ask, "Why such bad leaders and theories get created more and more as the movement acquires more power?" "Can we see the rot in the *soil* as the other part of the story – negative patterns /currents/ connections within the individuals, the oppressed, the activists and the movement itself, which is creating all those bad leaders and wrong theories?"

All who possess the skills of the *first domain* are good at seeing the 'mistakes' and one-sidedness in the theory of the *other*. This is surely crucial. However, the question is, "What blocks them from seeing their own inner problems? What blocks them from seeing and learning from the positive insights of their other sisters?" We have to examine the strange but pervasive failure to introspect how our inner blocks are created. We have to examine how our egotism and dependency on *Authorities* and 'Truths' manipulate our consciousness, our conscience, and also us. These are some central lights of the third domain.

Let us give some examples

Around 1930s in colonial India, we could see many streams of emancipation in the *organized* sector. We will talk about a few of the most radical currents within the larger, nation-wide streams. Many currents within the Gandhian/socialists were closer in many ways to the European anarchists and pacifists. They stood for abolition of hierarchy of the state, capitalism and its westernised /global system of 'Development', by promoting self-empowerment and autonomy of the people at the periphery – the toilers (and all the people) of the colonial village. Marxists stood for abolition of the economic/political hierarchy of capitalism and imperialism. dravidian (Footnote, 6, given in the end), 'lower' caste and dalit streams stood for abolition of the social hierarchy of brahmanism – its varna-caste system. Many adivasi streams took a stand against this social hierarchy and also the city-state centric 'Development' and life.

Each of these streams gave rise to an understanding of one of the spheres of the first and the second domain of radical theory; how one of the many specific dimensions of oppression (hierarchy) works, how it moulds the society and its mind. However, getting immersed within any of these streams can blind us from understanding the operation of other dimensions of Domination. Then, we will be unable to realize the power of Domination as a

whole that is created by the interconnection of its different dimensions. Instead, the view of the first and the second domain when enlightened by the outlook of the third domain is, "All these different struggles and critical wisdoms must deepen each other in order to counter the negative holism of Domination".

Here it becomes important to study as to what extent they (different streams of emancipation) did learn from each other and cooperated in addressing the burning problem of their time, that of opposing colonialism. It is also vital to understand where and why they failed to do so.

Each of these streams, too often, developed a large block towards its other sisters. This often began as a reaction to the weak side of others. This made them ignore the specific Domination/Hierarchy that others were realising and struggling against. Thus, the Gandhian streams got blocked from seeing the grave nature of the *class hierarchy* highlighted by the Marxists. Then, both the Gandhian and the Marxists streams got blocked from seeing the pervasive poison of the varna/caste hierarchy, and hence the need to struggle out of the folds of brahmanism/hinduism that was raised by the bahunjan/ dravidian/ dalits. (Footnote, 7, given in the end) Each stream was habituated into believing, "The hierarchy that we see is primary, and the one that *they* see is secondary." This would lead to rivalry, competition and conflict. Ironically this happened more due to the beautiful and valuable passionate commitment and preoccupation of each tendency to one specific aspect of emancipation. The heat of infighting would make each of them believe, "Why they (the rivals) are sabotaging our struggle that is the true one? They must be the agents of the hierarchy that is the real enemy."

This kind of *ego-block* is possibly reducing since the last decade of that century as life has humbled everybody. But still it is the main dogma of each of the official mainstream. This keeps creating utter one-sidedness fragmentation and finally, co-option.

Thus, the first and second domain specializes in describing/understanding how material and social structures and processes of exploitation work, how they control and organize the people's mind. The second and the third domain try to explore the processes within the world of emancipation. These domains try to understand the *mind* of the streams of resistance and compassion. They also seek to explore the scene of alternatives. These initiatives might be organised, visible and self-aware, belonging to streams like Marxist or Gandhian or dravidian or Ambedkarite. These initiatives may be, as they mostly are, small scale and issue based. These streams may even be invisible. They may be transitory, scattered, unconnected, un-aware acts, feelings, or dreams, of sensitivity or resistance. The second and third domains try to examine how all these initiatives and currents rebel and enrich each other. These domains also try to examine how these streams are blocked towards other sister initiatives or get co-opted.

We can also say that the first domain focuses on the outer, material and social structures of oppression. The third, on the other side, concentrates upon the world of emancipation. This means also examining the roots, seeds and soil of Domination within this continent, its processes of pollution, co-option, *divide and rule*. Thus, the third domain has to examine the ethical, psychological, spiritual, philosophical processes and relationships within and amongst the diverse species of emancipation and their environment.

Viewing the world of emancipation as an *eco-system of eco-systems*

[For more details about this kind of outlook, see, in the end of our write-up:

“Resource – Appendix III” – “A Eco-systemic or interbeing way of looking at everything:

1. *Self And Compassion In Engaged Buddhist Philosophy*

– *THE GREENING OF THE SELF* – Joana Macy

2. *A Historical Overview*

– *THE WEB OF LIFE* – Fritjof Capra]

We can view the web of life from two sides. First is the aspect of its oppression, misery, sickness – the web of Domination. The other is that of its liveliness, resistance and health – the web of emancipation. These aspects are intertwined.

Here, each species of initiatives, currents, webs in the web of emancipation, their specific richness, the connection within and amongst them, and the subversive power of the emancipatory world as a whole – influence and create each other. This is in sync with the emancipatory side of the life of individuals, their connections and their collectives enriching and creating each other.

A central project of the third domain then becomes, to connect, explore the streams of patterns/relationships and connections, learn with what is getting done in feeling and relating in practice and theory, to move beyond these fractures and deadlocks in the world of emancipation.

By the 60s, it was becoming usual to see society and Nature like an ocean, an inconceivably large *system of open and semi-open systems, an eco-system of eco-systems*. Here, entities those were like structures and others like streams were influencing and creating each other. This was the earlier Buddhist concept of *interbeing*. This was particularly emerging in the emancipatory terrain. We had for instance the ecology movement, Murray Bookchin (anarchist writer) in U.S., Situationist International manifesto (like the *Society of the Spectacle*) and post-structuralist writings from France, Tiep Hien from Vietnam.

It was easy then, to see the world of emancipation in the same way.

Here, each initiative and stream of emancipation can be considered as something like a complex and changing *individual*, a flowing pattern of connections, a community or an eco-system. Then we can explore its *social and psychohistory*. We can examine its relationships, positive connections with other initiatives, patterns/currents and streams, and also, what can be called as its *egotism* and *ego-blocks*; how the different streams influence and form each other, and so on. We can examine the history and traditions of these complex systems and streams of relationships and communities – the whole *eco-system of emancipation*.

For instance, this *egotism* of emancipatory streams and their *ego-blocks* towards each other is a grave problem. This can emerge when we fail to perceive *emancipation* as a vast eco-system, where innumerable streams are flowing and where connection amongst them, *lateral connectivity*, is the key to deepen emancipation. This *egotism* can contaminate us when we perceive emancipation to be something centred around one single stream or leadership, “Our correct path”. Streams of emancipation, howsoever differing from each other, follow the same paradigm — “we (must) have a correct Path (the highway of ‘ism, Truth or leadership or tradition)”. Then, striving to assemble the masses around such a ‘correct’ path becomes their highest priority. All of them follow one

central paradigm of our 'civilization' — the faith that there is one 'Truth' or true authority or 'conscious reason' that is the highest light.

Nevertheless, we have to consider the other side too. Can we, in most situations, do without such faith, paths, authorities and flags? The establishment is exceedingly powerful. We are so feeble and scattered and can at any time get co-opted into it. In this situation, to unite and act, we do need strength and push from grand icons, traditions, 'reason' or 'faith' — in 'isms', 'truths' and authorities. Most of us need stable organisations and persons with great capacities of intellect, abilities to manage, organise and lead — strong father figures. These can create good and large scale emancipatory struggles and growths.

But unfortunately, these also create some new and grave problems. It is a catch 22, a vicious circle. Consider the consequences of a tradition and paradigm that believes in the supremacy of some powerful leadership and some specific discourse. Will it not get centred on a particular grammar of reason or faith and Truth and its leaders, icons, intellectuals and believers? Will it not divide the oppressed into "leaders and activists/ followers and supporters — the 'knowledgeable'/ 'ignorant' and on the other side, the *other* — the 'misled' and the 'bad'?" Struggling and even competing to get more power, this particular-reason /authority-centric organizing will get forced to over-legitimise itself. It may try to become the *highway of emancipation*. It will then become open to infiltration, compromise and takeover by expansionist and hegemonic streams that offer to give it more power.

This problem was built into the classic western *scientific* tradition, with its belief in the possibility of making correct analyses and arriving at correct solution. Strangely similar is the problem with those who rebel against the *western scientific* brand of *reason* and uphold (like Gandhian streams) other grammars based on faith, Truth, gurus, messiahs, renunciation, and the *inner voice*.

Ironically, even those streams, from old Buddhism to post-structuralism and then post-modernism that declare, "There is no universal Truth/correct path", often get trapped in overvaluing their paradigm — whatever they may call it. They do question the arrogance of (traditions that believe in) the *universal Truth*. They do offer a sceptical faith and humbler reason. Nevertheless, somewhere in the process of this debate and power struggle (about theory), they too, many a time, fall into the vicious circle of 'official' philosophic discourse. This in consequence often leads to the creation of a closed faith in a "new pluralist paradigm", a new 'ism, a new flag. Moreover, these streams are often unable to appreciate and see things from the stark and one-dimensional point of view of the exploited, ravaged by the terrible power of the economic/political order.

We emphasise, no one is immune from such pollution of power in theoretical system building. We in this writing or anyone else writing theoretically / philosophically, even though against the dominance of theoretical systems, and the radical market of such literature, get enmeshed with the pollution of power of such debates and disseminations and lobby fights.

Additionally, most of such debates and disseminations and conflicts give less value to the innumerable soft, fluid and non-assertive, mostly invisible *grammars and dialects of ordinary life*. These are the feelings/emotions, sensitivity, relationships, transactions, culture, spirituality and so on (other than those that can be seen by some official *reason*), with which we also relate, communicate, explore and experiment most of the time. Reason (and

faith) does shape them, but do they not form reason (and faith) too? Also here, each grammar of reason of dominating groups (for example the official ones like the Western upper classes and their *science* or our older Confucianism or brahmanism, or other Establishments of Faith) attack and mostly co-opt every other stream of life and realisation. *This is particularly so within the dominated and the informal currents.* The system and culture of Domination and its egotism and hegemony easily contaminates all kinds of streams of emancipation with this kind of vertical hierarchical distribution of meaning, dignity, honour and power, such drive to expand and compete. *This is the catch-22 of 'conscious organizing' around 'correct path/leadership'.* If we take this kind of path, we often can organise positive conviction, authenticity, passion, large movements and get many basic rights. We seem to be moving towards liberation. However, at the subtler level, too often we get co-opted, as we grow larger. On the other side, in societies with poor growth of individuals and extensive economic marginalisation, there is little space for more democratic ways of resistance. Hence, if we do not take such (authoritarian) paths, we remain oppressed and conditioned as usual!

Such a situation of helplessness makes us realize that the system is far too strong, flexible, subtle and invisible than what it seems to be! When we have our *fall*, we often internalise this and get stuck to the faith that the system is omnipotent and has to be accepted, "You have to play according to its rules". Yes, it is very powerful, but is it all-powerful? Is there no possibility and prospect of resistance? Can we not see the streams and traditions of the organised and the *informal terrain* that keep emerging, subverting, delegitimizing and pushing back Domination? Can we not conceive a world of currents against Domination as having the ability to resist co-option and create co-operation and effectiveness to counter and reduce Domination?

Can we not go beyond having to choose between organising in old ways or of rejecting them? Can we not overcome the paradigm of polarities, find and nurture the linkages between them? Can we not find the hidden spaces where we can take strong stands, fight co-option (into Domination) and also avoid getting trapped in the one-sidedness of our arrogant 'isms simultaneously?

On one side, realizations of the second domain help to dissect and reveal the anatomy, depths and connections of the roots of power of the establishment. A record/balance-sheet of the *conscious* emancipatory movements in the past one hundred and fifty years clearly reveals that the system of exploitation is much deeper than what it seems to be. In fact its *visible* structures like the system of private property and the state might be just the tip of the iceberg.

Society (in this write-up we are using the term *society* to include the biosphere as well) can be seen as an *ocean* where currents of social (political and economic, psycho/socio/historical and ecological) processes, material and visible, but mostly invisible, form and connect each mind and body to all other minds and structures. In such an oceanic eco-system, waves and streams, *patterns/currents/connections* form and are formed by each material process, bodies, self, relationships, concepts and desires, reasons and dreams, communities and biosphere. Here, each act of unequal exchange, disrespect and domination (institutional charity, security and protection), not only between haves and have-nots but even within the haves and within the have-nots connect

and empower the negative patterns/currents, the negative eco-system, the mostly hidden body of the system. In fact realizations of the second domain can make us despondent.

On the other side, the *third domain*, like a sociologist, psychologist and historian dedicated to and ever on the lookout for the prospects and problems of resistance can help. It does not just look within any one stream of resistance that mostly keep getting co-opted. The third domain looks around and asks, “*Streams and tradition of resistance and compassion, visible and mostly invisible*, what is their role in our lives, movements and the whole society? Is not this tradition stronger than its visible tips, the so-called conscious and organized sectors of emancipatory movement?”

The second super power

Someone helps a hurt being, even though for a moment; someone feels guilty because of failing to help; someone grieves for failing to feel guilty; grieves for enjoying gratification and not being able to avoid acquiring power over the other because of helping — every act of striving for sensitivity (conscious or unconscious), compassion and also resistance and rebellion form and connect positive patterns/currents of counter-hegemony. (The same acts also carry the seeds of Domination, and connect easily with negative patterns/currents. See **footnote - 8**) Such positive actions, currents and connections can be within the various types of oppressed, within *have-nots* and amongst the *haves* as well. This *informal*, diffuse and mostly invisible terrain is much larger than the visible and *declared* sector of emancipation. This terrain also keeps nourishing the *organized* sector, helping it to keep resisting the toxins of failure, sectarianism and co-option.

On 15th March 2003, ten million people marched around the world against the US preparations for war on Iraq. The day after, even the New York Times was impelled to call this, the “world public opinion”, as the “second super power”. This, people’s resistance to imperialism is a deeper challenge to the US than the earlier notion of the Soviet block as being the *second super power*. It is clear since the 50s that though at one level the Soviet Block did challenge the US lobby, but at a deeper level, it was a constituent of the system!

The whole extent of the *second super power* (people’s resistance to Domination/Hierarchy and despotism), as we understand, is the unimaginably complex eco-system of positive patterns/currents/connections and rivers in the ocean of society/social mind. Has it not been always there? However, it always remains enmeshed, polluted and co-opted in the negative patterns/currents. Nevertheless, it is far larger than the visible, vocal tip that was seen by the New York Times.

One basic character of this second super power, as we have been seeing since 60s, is its immense variety. For instance at that time, we could see visible sensitivity and rebellions that were emerging from within the innumerable niches and nooks of the eco-system of oppression — even the ones we could never imagine earlier. Streams of rebellion, mutual aid and compassion flowing via the people on the streets, in the prisons, asylums, lesbians, physically impaired, mentally different, the lonely, ‘weak’, ‘meek’ — all lacking the aggression and management powers of the ‘normal’ — erupted, particularly in the west. The large-scale struggles of the toilers, women, blacks/dalits, and those against capitalism and colonialism, nationalism and authoritarianism were going on too. We can examine how they must have influenced and shaped each other and flowed at the same time.

What we are saying is that the visible and organised struggles are only the diverse tips of the immense, diffused and invisible traditions and patterns/currents of resistance, empathy and caring, of different colours that are flowing from and across each nook and niche of the eco-system of oppression. We can perceive this as the eco-system of emancipation enmeshed within and resisting the eco-system of Domination. Emancipation can thus be seen as being similar to the subterranean water pools, the raindrops, mist and moisture, the forest – all that constitute the main body of the water eco-system along with the visible lakes, streams and rivers. It is more varied and beyond our imagination than life in a rain forest.

How connections amongst these positive patterns/currents within the organised, visible and informal, mostly invisible sector, in different segments of the 'eco-system of emancipation', enhance each other, and how the concerned persons can nurture them – becomes a core perspective and concern of emancipation.

In complex and often paradoxical ways, these visible and invisible processes of Domination and resistance keep shaping and creating each other. Thus, if Domination is a vast flow and connection of negative patterns/streams and transactions, then, in this social eco-system, there is another aspect too. There is the positive side of this eco-system (model) where each positive transaction and current connects, creates and empowers the rest. The negative side of the eco-system has visible structures – the class, State, gender, caste and so on. The positive side, the world of compassion and resistance too has the visible and organised aspects (mass organisations, demonstrations, networks, fronts, parties, NGOs...). But, most of the vast body of both Domination and emancipation is constituted by the invisible mist-like tendrils, transactions, connections and flows of intermeshing positive and negative patterns/currents.

We need not invent new theories and conceptual tools to learn to look from the vantage-point of the *third domain*.

These theories and conceptual tools were mostly developed in the first and second domain. We mostly need to extend and apply these to the sector of *organised resistance* — its paradigms, theories, practice and life. We must do this also inside the space of each moment of 'ordinary' compassion, resistance and getting co-opted in life and also in the vast space of the social ocean that forms and is shaped by the *organised resistance*.

Thus, in this way of looking at things, using metaphors like *eco-systems* – Domination, compassion, resistance and the *body* of the society, visible and structured, and invisible and fluid – all create each other in ways that are both positive and negative (from the point of view of emancipation). Hence the three domains of radical reflection must also create each other, as they are different and enmeshed representative aspects of the same *world of emancipation*.

One central concern of this *third domain* is to explore the fractures and conflictual relationship amongst:

– (**firstly**) the various sections of the *organised* sector of social resistance and compassion (the ideological and holistic ones, like Marxists or Gandhians; the organised resistance of specific categories of victims, like workers, bahun/dravidian/dalits, women, peasants, adivasis...) and,

– **(secondly)** the *organised sections* on one side and on the other, what we call the vast *informal*, unorganised and diffuse terrain (visible or invisible) of the streams of empathy, care and mutual aid, resistance and awareness amongst people everywhere.

This second problem is built into the paradigm and tradition of most organised sectors. This is to emphasise the negative sides of this *informal* terrain, to regard it as just ‘unconscious’, ‘passive’, ‘unconnected and fragmented’, ineffective, ‘spontaneous’, not of any consequence – always needing to be *organised*, ‘educated’ and ‘led’. The *interbeing* (eco-system) outlook sees the *informal* terrain as more than a vast jumble of scattered, passive and unconscious positive acts, at the mercy of the establishment. This outlook, with its focus on processes of connection and flows, patterns /currents and strings, streams and traditions, light up the *informal* terrain as the positive aspect of a social ocean, alive and vibrant, and a crucial sector of resistance too. Both its problems and prospects are immense.

In fact, the mindset, paradigms and traditions that create a hierarchical relationship between the *informal* and the *organised* sector of emancipation form some deep and pervasive roots of major problems like egotism/authoritarianism, vanguardism, sectarianism, fragmentation, reformism and co-option, and so on.

Possibly the root problem of most organised social movements is the faith that “expanding our organised power /ideology /struggle is the best way to demolish the establishment, the best highway towards emancipation”. Unfortunately, this faith is only one part of the truth! If the project to ‘expand’ is carried out in ways that compete with and reduce the innumerable other streams of resistance, friendship and empathy, don’t we keep landing into the *Master plan* of Domination — to *divide, co-opt and rule*?

To respond to this problem, the third domain tries to go beyond looking at the world through the specific vantage point of just one stream of resistance. The third domain’s approach is to strive to look from the point of view and passion of each. It looks at each specific stream of emancipation with special sensitivity, appreciation, and also criticality. It tries to feel their respective strengths and also limitations and vulnerabilities. The third domain considers the sociology, psychohistory, and anatomy of their problems of co-option, sectarianism, blocks and fractures. All these problems hinder their mutual enrichment. These flaws allow Domination to manipulate them, to *divide and rule*.

Like a good gardener, this third domain must feel for the health of each species in the eco-system of compassion and resistance – animal, plant and also humus, moisture, bacteria and so on. This gardener has to commit to nurture the whole eco-system of the life of emancipation in its infinite variety of co-operation, empathy and resistance against greed, plunder, and other calamities. In fact, the gardener knows that the three keys, which impart vitality to the world of compassion and resistance, are *specificity*, *diversity* and *connectivity* of different positive initiatives and patterns/currents.

This outlook can help initiatives, patterns /currents and traditions of resistance and nurture; can build-up their specificity, mutuality and strength to subvert. It celebrates whenever sister streams of *organized* compassion and resistance are able to reduce competition and enhance each other consciously, or as it is more often the case, unconsciously. Striving against “we are the best” tradition that often becomes the main base of egotism, we can learn to fight our arrogance, the seeds of Domination within us. Such an outlook also

helps us strive against our superior stance towards the vast invisible *informal* terrain of sensitivity, caring and resistance.

We must make clear our intention here, what we do not want to do. We are using descriptive categories like the three domains, metaphors like eco-system, patterns/currents, streams and connections in Interbeing and so on. We do not mean this to be some new theory, philosophy or path, or the best way of looking at things. It is one way among so many ways of describing emancipation and its problems. In fact, the Tiep Hien stream considers, “*To believe the way one is describing things as best, to get attached to such ideas, is the most pervasive problem in the world of emancipation and the most insidious and harmful amongst all attachments*”. **These ways of describing are** more to help in opening up, witnessing and connecting with streams of sensitivity and self-criticality that can change our habits and traditions of organising, feelings, relating and living, acting, theorising. It is happening everywhere. The third domain is a call to network, to celebrate such streams/connections/patterns.

It certainly does not stand for some kind of ‘holistic emancipation-in-interbeing’ as the new Truth that upholds, “Everyone should give up ego, one-sidedness, anchors and sectarianism as (these are in) the ‘mine is the best’ outlook; the more everyone believes in this, the more we can join in a great unity that will overcome the problem of pollution of power.”

Considering everyone, except the claimant, to be “one-sided and sectarian” is but a typical expression of the sectarian mindset. Similarly, believing that “if each of the rival tendencies gives up their *mine is the best outlook*, we will have the true path to unity in emancipation”, is also another variety of sectarian thinking.

Moreover, claiming our philosophy to be the best because it is the *most holistic*, considering all other streams of resistance as one-sided, only becomes another one-sided pattern/current. It is as prone to egotism as any other. In fact, egotism and sectarianism works best from within the garb of ‘anti-sectarian’ and ‘holistic’ languages! On the other side, often the declared “one-sided” streams of resistance may be more engaged with suffering, and the holistic ones may be bothering more about ideas and personal journey.

Exploring one-sidedness

We all need support, crutches and handholds to move in a difficult path. We all develop some attachment, long-term anchoring to some extent, with these handholds. Our belief that “My path/leadership is the best” is often an aid, a crutch to hold on to the path of compassion and rebellion. This might be true also, in specific situations and times. Such a faith is often necessary to move ahead against the all-powerful blizzard of an icy, slippery, seductive and menacing Domination/Hierarchy. If someone talks about some Buddha who loved and rebelled without attachments and anchors, taking support just from ones own strength and wisdom, we would say, “Such a Buddha could not have been human like us. Such a Buddha must be a delusion that can make us insensitive and arrogant. Is not such a faith an attachment to a new anchor?”

Likewise, consider those who face a specific stream of suffering/oppresion/exploitation, like workers, women, or dalits. Then, to realise its depth, for oneself and others in similar predicament, to see the *side* of oppresion that they face as their main prison, to prioritise their struggle – cannot be considered as one-sidedness or

sectarian. It is *taking side*, and a crucial key to emancipation. Specificities are the primary heart of emancipatory holism.

For specific victims, class, cluster and individuals in specific situations, giving priority to their struggle, more than the concerns and issues of others, and concentrating on their path is necessary. This inevitably leads to some amount of one-sidedness. Many a time (along with its negative consequences), power-struggle for empowerment becomes inevitable. Such struggles are often essential if the oppressed are to effectively rise against the power of Domination. Specifically, where Domination is grossly aggressive and the victim is weak, such need becomes an urgency.

Thus, we mean by our third domain as also the need to compassionately understand 'one-sidedness', anchors and power-struggle of the oppressed, its positive as well as negative consequences.

Many a time it is the need of the hour that creates a passionate need for taking one side and anchor. However, this need should not make us believe that our side (for instance, considering workers struggle against Capital) is superior to that of others (women's struggle against patriarchy, dalits against casteism) in different situations.

The problem becomes serious when hegemony/seeds and soil of Domination, thrive upon, connect and spread the negative side over the positive, when it uses these negative connections to pit sister initiatives and streams for emancipation into competition and conflict.

The problem becomes fatal when streams to counter these *divide and co-opt* patterns/currents of Domination are not connected, are weak, and not seen or celebrated in the world of emancipation.

The problem then, is to study and learn when and how hegemony succeeds in building and connecting power pollution, inner hierarchy, attachment to our *handholds* and also when hegemony fails; when emancipation can grow despite such pollution, when such positive growth reduces the problem within and when sister streams succeed in building up mutual enrichment.

Our approach is that all emancipatory initiatives and non-oppressive human transactions have not only positive but also negative connections/patterns and currents associated with them. Domination/Hegemony is the system of negative connections and counter-Domination /counter-hegemony is the system of positive connections. In this situation, what is the road towards better balance, mutually enhancing connections, a richer eco-system of emancipation? Most of the times, can we do this by not taking sides? On the other hand, can we do it if we lose ourselves to those who are taking sides and get into sectarian boxes? We must of course act on our own, choosing one or more of the so many *middle paths* that are appropriate for us. However, the need is also to create better connections between positive sides of streams that are taking sides; supporting the taking of paths that are *middle* in each nook, niche and corner of the whole eco-system of emancipation. How to act and connect better to enrich whole of counter-Domination is also our journey and concern.

Need for conceptual tools to pose and examine the problems of conflict among sister streams and fractures within the eco-system of emancipation

This is another central concern of the third domain. Currents of counter-Domination are everywhere. However, they are always enmeshed with the *seeds and soil* of Domination. Every act of nurture, anti-oppressive subversion or reason, empathising with and helping a hurt being or staging a rebellion have both these positive and negative patterns /currents flowing through it. These currents create and in turn are created by connections and patterns /currents, structures and traditions of both Domination and resistance.

The negative patterns /currents /connections among emancipatory acts and streams create gaps, blocks, conflict and fracture. The positive ones heal these and enhance mutual enrichment.

Organized traditions of resistance and compassion have always been bedevilled by a series of conflicts and splits

Streams of compassion, for different types of suffering, have a strange tendency to part ways from the streams of rebellion against oppression, which are also rooted in compassion. This leaves welfare Statism, hierarchical community, and Dominational religion free to exploit compassion and try to disconnect it from and then pit it against resistance. (By *Dominational religion* we will mean in our write-up those systems of religion that may or may not be directly organised by the State. Nevertheless, they are a part of the 'normal' hierarchical society and its social machinery of control – cultural hegemony and politics. *Dominational religion* can be large or small, like miniature and embryonic State.)

Similarly, consider the problem of *inner* change — changing the culture and traditions of Domination inside people, our relationships and self, our strivings against egotism, greed and competition. Should this not be as crucial as the *outer* change — the struggle to reclaim and expand our space, to change the material roots and systems of greed and inequality, the external structures of Domination? Should not they give breadth, depth and life to each other? However, organized religion puts the *inner* as the centre, and organized *scientific* socialism puts the *outer* as the main arena of struggle. Thus instead of complementing, these streams of *inner* and *outer* change get split, and in the process are forced to be at war with each other.

In our notes, we will continually grapple with the problem of posing and examining a series of fractures and conflicts amongst core emancipatory concerns and streams. Firstly, these are the fracture and conflict amongst the categories of compassion / caring and reason / resistance. Then, these are those amongst the intertwined categories of egotism, authoritarianism, and followerism.

The problem of fracture between streams of compassion, caring, reason, resistance and rebellion:

We are not saying that compassion or sensitivity is always great and is something that should now be added to the 'revolution' – the more we do it the better it is. We do not agree with this kind of outlook. In fact, was not compassion and sensitivity the genesis and the root cause of each stream of revolution? On the other side, do not most Dominational religions that make the loudest claim about their compassion, work to enhance and stabilise the soil of oppressive systems?

Our third domain looks for conceptual tools that would analyse *compassion* as a complex and many-sided tradition, which can be connected positively or negatively. We can conceptualise the categories of compassion, caring, reason, and resistance as deeply interconnected eco-systems. Thus, each of them has an immense number of different sources. Various positive and negative patterns/currents are created, connected and are flowing through the nooks and niches of these eco-systems. In this canvass, we want to examine questions like – how Domination misconnects, separates, exploits compassion, caring, reason, and resistance. Here, we can also discuss in what way can this *compassion* and the other categories like resistance, rebellion and emancipation be reclaimed to nurture each other.

In the third domain we try to understand how and when helping a hurt/impaired person (or any other being, 'even' an insect) can enhance the political movement against exploitation and Domination, and also when it does not do so, when it empowers Domination/Hierarchy. We explore here as to how counter-Domination seeks to connect these positive patterns/currents laterally and horizontally, healing the fractures, enriching each other and the eco-system of resistance.

The problem of conflict amongst the streams against egotism

Many veterans, witnessing the *fall* of innumerable varieties of socialism, say, "Egotism of our leaders was the main problem". There is a lot of truth in it. Struggle against Domination, without engaging with our egotism, can open us to grave negative patterns/currents like factionalism, sectarianism and co-option. But, as we discussed above regarding compassion, *we are not saying,*

" 'Anti-egotism' (struggle against egotism) and inner change – is always positive; it is the 'cure-all' medicine for all types of pollution of power afflicting social movements, and the more we can practice this ('anti-egotism') the better everything will be".

How to conceptualise egotism (for our specific purpose)?

Can we see egotism/anti-egotism as just some ethical *value* at a personal level, or some one-dimensional *character* of an individual – like one's nose? Religion for instance places a high value on striving against egotism that is seen as a *personal* character. It neglects or is blind to the arrogance, authoritarianism, *egotism* organised by upper class /State /caste /masculinity and so on. Can we separate egotism from the processes of authoritarianism and dependency that are organised by different systems of Domination/Hierarchy?

We look at them (egotism / hegemony /chauvinism /dependency and their opposites) as eco-systems, currents/connections/ patterns, negative and positive. We can thus consider these currents to be emerging from, combining in complex ways and shaping the innumerable nooks and niches of society. Each transaction of inequality creates/connects negative patterns/currents, the ensemble of which constitute the eco-systems of egotism/authoritarianism/dependency. Similarly, each striving for equality/friendship/empathy creates and connects counter-currents of autonomy, anti-egotism and anti-authoritarianism. In addition, each specific type of inequality/hierarchy (for instance patriarchy, classism, casteism/racism) creates elements of a special type

of egotism/dependency. Likewise, these processes (of egotism/anti-egotism, dependency and autonomy) are of infinite variety.

Thus, they are like connected patterns of currents that emerge from and influence the life at the level of individuals, relationships, clusters, our collective unconscious and other societal categories – associated with different systems of Domination.

Hence, there is no 'universal' category of single type of egotism that can be countered by a single process of anti-egotism. There is no single 'highway', path of meditation, faith, inner-voice, or scientific analysis and 'correct' commitment /striving /struggle that can build up our anti-egotistic sensibility against each and every type of egotism. All these will work, but limited to a specific space.

For instance, struggle against patriarchy can build up our sensitivity against patriarchal egotism/dependency. It cannot, by itself, sensitise us against the egotism of classism or casteism. It may not even sensitise us to other innumerable varieties of patriarchy that are far away from our limited experience. In fact, any emancipatory stream that is striving with dedication against one type of *egotism* can create an ego-block towards other sister streams that are striving against different types of egotism. This is an irony and a crucial problem.

Now the question that needs to be examined (in this canvass) is how various patterns/currents of egotism /dependency /authoritarianism within the space of persons /relationships /clusters and other societal levels of Domination create and influence each other. How do struggles for *inner change* (against various types of egotism at the personal and community level) enrich or get fractured from the struggles for *outer change* (against egotism/ hierarchy/authoritarianism at different societal levels of Domination)?

Another example of 'egotism' afflicting emancipatory streams and disturbing their mutual learning

We discuss here another example of tendency conflicts creating stereotypes, blocks and distortions in emancipatory world. This can be called 'autonomous individual/anarchist West vs. communitarian East'. This tradition of conflict often blinds the anti-oppression traditions of the West and the East (India and Asia) to learn from each other.

Many western radical and anarchist traditions get trapped in the view, "Oh they (in Asia) are so authoritarian and hierarchical, Stalinists, Maoists or authoritarian religion minded like Gandhian or Buddhists. What can we learn from them those who do not stand upon the paradigm of autonomy of the individual?" However, along with this there also is a minority sub-tradition. Reacting to the lonely individualist and rationalist culture, many go all the way in the other side. Thus we find Western friends becoming more devoted to emancipatory authoritarian streams - from spiritual ones to Maoist (when that was prevalent) - than us easterners. Also this prevalent 'truth' that "movements in backward societies will be backward" can create a reaction and a psychological dilemma or a defense for some who have got more space as individuals. Thus, many radicals of the West who are sympathetic to the East are often guilty, apologetic and become blind regarding the distortions/ authoritarianism of the eastern movements.

Like a mirror image, we find different kind of block in our East, "Western anarchism is too full of individualism and cynical faithlessness (against all authorities) for us. Such trees cannot grow in our soil. These trees are a

positive outcome of the consumerist west. May be when we grow so rich and powerful as they are, we can think of such luxuries.” Some amongst us see these streams as, “negative streams in a degenerate culture”. This then blocks us from learning from the world of emancipatory and anarchist currents that are based upon sensibilities, rights and creativities of the oppressed individual around the world, particularly where the individual has had more room to grow. But this is not whole of the truth. There also exists a minority sub-tradition. These traditions often react against the ugliness and cooption of the paternalist emancipatory streams from Marxian to Gandhian or Buddhist. Here we fail to see the soil and situation when paternalism and hierarchy associated with emancipation can be an effective need against Domination and hierarchy of the exploiting systems. We fail to see the widespread mutualist and collectivist streams in our society intertwined with such paternalist hierarchy. We fail to see their strengths along with their weaknesses. In such a situation we fail to learn from the streams of anti-establishment wisdom that are not couched in western rationalist language.

In fact, in both these traditions (in the eastern and western emancipatory streams) there exists a culture of reaction and herd instinct. We, mostly reacting to our environment and our situation easily run after what is trendy and fashionable. Here in the East, while struggling for our autonomy we get attracted towards and easily learn from the more individualistic and fashionable tendencies of western radicalism as the ultimate in truth. It also gets boosted by our colonial mindset. There in the West emptiness of consumerism takes us easily towards revivalism and paternalism. This then begins to look more fashionable and radical.

In all these above stated situations blocks, splits and cooption into Domination is inevitable.

Cultural/Spiritual rebellion:

We, particularly those in the Marxist tradition, had believed in the formation, as a result of the *laws of capitalist development*, of a vast economically and culturally homogeneous working class – pitted against Capital. No doubt, in our type of *developing* countries, we do have growth of such a working class in a broad sense. Capitalist ‘development’, its hyper-exploitation, demolition of sustainable agriculture/ forestry and rural resource base, ecological devastations, demolition of slums... creates and unites large bodies of people living and struggling as proletariat at the bottom.

Nevertheless, we also have growth of hierarchies of all kinds and colours within the working class at the same time. (Globally, the apex of the hierarchies is more in the *developed* zones.) There are hierarchies based on economy/conditions of work – permanent, contract, migrant/bonded/geographical (from ecologically devastated and hyper-exploited zones), the perennially ‘unemployed’, criminalized, bloated underbelly of the ‘productive’ sector. Superimposed on these are the hierarchies based on gender, age (women and children working in the

degrading, low paid/unpaid, home/part time sectors); caste (dalits still in the slot of sweeper/coolies/'lumpen proletariat'); ability, religion, nationality and so on.

On top of it, *development*, *commodification*, media blitz and so on, is creating an insidious process to submerge the working class identity and ethos within the vast sea of middle/lower middle/ lower class layers. Here ethos of the 'civilised' society, the culture of competition, *developmentalism* and consumerism try to brainwash and drown working class people. Here, this reality of the rat race and handing down of the loans and 'gifts' of capitalism is projected as the only practical route to freedom and growth. Thus, we are left with the value system of the isolated individual and the patriarchal family, struggling to climb up to the lower middle and then the middle class layers, an imagined place in the sun in the metros. Of course this rise in standard of living, exposure and more space (especially for those who 'succeed') does create the condition of growth of the workers as individuals. In a complexed way, it leads to a different but a rich life, emancipatory initiatives and movements. However, on the other side, working class identity is slowly getting sucked into the quicksand of the lower/ middle class identity. This centralist and hierarchical 'development' is enmeshing the working class more and more with the processes of Domination and capitalist globalisation. (Footnote, 9, given in the end)

These hierarchies and their values and culture within the working class are like malignant growths, feeding upon themselves. They spread and colonise the world of emancipation extensively. They create fractures and storms of all kinds – fragmentation, conflicts, and riots. Instead of the oppressed uniting against the establishment, *negative collectivities* of different sections of the oppressed, competing and clashing with each other is more common. See for example the religion based communal campaigns and riots. Even positive collectives (emancipatory organisations) tend to turn into oppressive hierarchies with time. And perhaps the most common irony of the last century is the experience that the God of power and the God of money, in the long run, subsume the God of socialism.

How can we even imagine of and move towards building up *horizontal* (non-Dominational) connectivity and rebellion while floundering in this stark chaos within us, the people? How can we grapple with Domination — its varieties from militarism to consumerism to debt traps of centralist 'development', from its welfarism (governmental and non-governmental) to the colonisation of our spiritual/psychological quest by the vast market of Guru/religious orders, to revivalist fundamentalism?

By the 60s, even traditions of official Marxism had to admit that problems of hierarchy, values of Domination spreading inside the oppressed people, their revolution, leading to their subsequent degeneration were as grave as the struggles against the *outer* structures. The GPCR (Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of China in the 60s) was the largest of such experiment and theory to 'cure' this epidemic. But this only gave rise to a state of paralysis and permanent collapse of all radical opposition in China that has continued for the last 40 years! They tried to solve the problems created by (vertical) power, with the tools of impositional power. They tried to solve problems of ethical and cultural degeneration of the communist party and post revolutionary social institutions (that they believed to be created just by "feudal and capitalist values and revisionist leadership") with the mindset and conceptual tools of vanguardism! Here too we encounter a similar split. The searchlights of the first domain are traditionally habituated to look for just the "enemy out there, the wrong leaders, paths and structures". This

kind of tunnel vision can block our eyes from recognising the problems within us, the *correct leaders/followers!* After the fiasco of GPCR, we realised that the problem of cultural transformation was far more complicated than what we had conceived with our available theory.

As our Marxist eyes started recovering from this state of shock, we began to see a vast *rainbow coalition* – a galaxy of cultural rebellions of all colours. We began to learn from these innumerable visible and invisible streams within the formal and informal currents struggling against the different and specific gods of power, hierarchy and money. The resistance of women, bahujan /dravidian /dalits (and anti-racism in the west), adivasi (indigenous people), Gandhians, ecologists, environmentalists, anti-colonialists, religion associated socialists, anti-communal currents, hippy and radical folk spiritual currents such as within fakirs/bauls were lighting up new dimensions of ethics, culture and sociology of resistance. These were situated inside and outside the visible struggles of the oppressed and alienated.

It was becoming clear that our labour and material commodities were not the only things that were being exploited by the system. Our capacity for creating love, empathy, relationships, dignity and worth, meaning (of our existence and that of our concepts), idealism and spirituality, our spontaneity, desire, joy and sexuality, along with our relationship with Nature — everything was being exploited, commodified and engineered. All these were being made into power, hierarchies, status, possession. Extreme deprivation of basic needs, the sheer savagery of hunger and social insecurity often obscures this mode of exploitation. This is mostly the situation amongst the immense layers of working people at the bottom of developing countries. But, wherever such intense poverty and economic discomfort is less, the same mode of exploitation and alienation is clearly tangible. This can be felt, for example in the massive problem of alienation, breakdown of communities and relationships, mental health crisis, competition, addictions, fundamentalism, violence and so on. This (cultural /psychic /ethical /spiritual exploitation) works with the same relentless intensity wherever one is situated in the hierarchy within the working class, or even outside, whether for the highly paid *middle class* worker in U.K. or the person trapped in a management role. (Footnote, 10, given in the end)

However, there is a positive side too. The consequences of the same mode of exploitation also lead to the creation of an existential crisis within its victims. This paradoxically can become a basis of togetherness and reconstruction of culture and ethics of emancipatory opposition, within the fragmented, rootless oppressed. On one side this emptiness and crisis becomes rich breeding ground for the wrong kind of cultural / spiritual growth. Authoritarian fundamentalisms of all types grow here and are most visible. But this is not all that is happening. Here struggle against the *cultural /psychic /ethical /spiritual /social exploitation* can counter the forces of Domination /Hierarchy. In fact, many socialist observers in 'developed' countries see that the call for material gains can hardly create enthusiasm, idealism and socialist mobilisation for workers higher up in the hierarchy. Such call obviously cannot create better understanding and connection with those lower down. On the other side, ethical/cultural/spiritual engagements are becoming a major factor in giving subversive power and connection to emancipation. These are of course more as a fantastically varied collage, mist-like and amorphous, and thus are mostly non-visible, non-tangible, unconnected (can also be co-opted easily). But, are these not at some level connecting, strengthening and enriching emancipation? Interestingly, these are the oppressed, who despite not

facing extremes of material deprivation are creating massive, radical, effective initiatives against contemporary Domination. We can see them all over Europe and US, mobilising against war or Globalisation, calls that are more idealistic, emancipatory and in the interest of those down below, even for distant countries and issues like Iraq.

The third domain and cultural rebellion: need for a cultural struggle within the space of cultural and other movements

Each category of oppression has a cultural dimension along with its material one. Hence, the oppressed have to struggle also at the level of culture. People as women must struggle against the ideology, values and ethos of patriarchy. Similarly, people as workers, dalit, peasants/activists must struggle against those (cultures) of their respective *external* oppressive establishment i.e., capitalism, casteism, and the centralist development model. People as men, upper class, upper caste/race and all others caught within the roles and traps of victimisers, need also to struggle against Domination to reclaim their humanity (footnote, 11, given in the end) and join emancipation. The first and the second domain study how all the different categories of the oppressed struggle against the outer establishment at these levels to reclaim their culture, to pool their resources and fight conventions and hierarchy in society at large.

However, this terrain (of all these struggles to reclaim their culture /spirituality) must be swept by a cultural movement at yet another level. This needs to be focussed more inward, against the culture of Domination/Hierarchy, the pollution of power within the spaces of all movements and initiatives – even cultural. Do not all initiatives of cultural/spiritual rebellion, however radical, carry the seeds of Domination within? Do they not subtly manipulate these initiatives, pushing them on the path of chauvinism /blind faith /hierarchy, sectarianism, fragmentation and co-option?

Thus, all the cultural-spiritual struggles must also have a third domain. Domination, working from inside, tries to connect all initiatives and patterns /currents in the world of emancipation vertically, disconnecting them from each other. But, the processes of counter-Domination connect them laterally, to each other. These lateral connections need to be celebrated with cultural movements. Along with and within the organised and informal struggles for material and socio-cultural empowerment, there must be another kind of struggle that showers upon them a culture that can thaw out and reduce their egotism and hegemony, inner blocks and self-centrism. This would then enable them to open up and receive strengths and sensitivities from the *other* sister streams. Like moisture, this culture can help soften the core of the “we-are-the-most-significant” mentality of the *organised* and the individual/group-centric tradition everywhere. By creating non-vanguardist relationships with the vast ocean of *informal sector* — streams of compassion, resistance, anti-egotism and understanding in everyday life — all the cultural-spiritual movements can receive these *rainbow* strengths flowing all around. On the other side, activism in the informal terrain — our creating of friendship, compassion, resistance and subversion of norms in interpersonal spaces — too often suffers from conformism/pollution of power. The same can make us insensitive, arrogant and possessive, in some other sphere. Our third domain will help us also in radically introspecting within such beautiful work, relationships, ethics and wisdoms, in ordinary life.

One example of examining cultural/spiritual resistance

Learning from the menacing growth of communalism/revivalism in India

Earlier, we (from the Marxist and socialist traditions) used to believe, “The problem of re-organizing the religious/spiritual/personal/family life of the individual can and should wait till the material, political and economic revolution”. We also believed, “The neo-fascists (from the hindu and muslim religion) standing on the grounds of religious revivalism are creatures of the pre-capitalist era; such “irrationalists and obscurantist forces” will get marginalized and thrown out of the popular spaces with the development of capitalism, education, secular government and market. This will also happen with the organizing of the *rational* struggles of the oppressed against economic and political exploitation.”

What does the reality show? All our rational expectations are being turned upside down. The hindutva communalism/nationalism (and also communalism amongst the minority muslim sections) are marginalizing and throwing the socialists out, since the 80s and 90s. Even the Gandhians, who gave importance to the non-communal spiritual life of the people, remain helpless observers as pogroms and massacres like Gujarat go on. Paradoxically, it is the oppressed, workers, dalits, unemployed, adivasis, ‘backward’ castes, women, who get more easily swayed by the communalists led by sections of the exploiting classes. This happens, sweeping aside seventy to eighty years of work by Gandhians or socialists.

Thus, today we have to understand how the terrain of culture, togetherness, identity, festivals, sexuality, joy or sharing of grief, codes of transactions and support, ethics, meaning, religion, spirituality and community life is related with different dimensions of Domination. It is becoming clear that the Gods of profit, consumerism, money, scienticism, State/Power, nationalism, and sexuality and the Gods of organized religion have a paradoxical relationship. One set of God creates anguish and emptiness, insecurity and chaos – the soil where the Gods of religious communalism and fascism flourish. They all fight, but keep constructing each other too in negative interbeing. It is a vicious circle.

It is clear today that cultural-spiritual rebellion is as crucial as the economic and political. We must learn from the world of streams of anti-communalism and anti-sectarian/egalitarian spirituality. These streams live on, however amorphous and mist-like, enfeebled, distorted and co-opted they are. These come to us from the earliest times. They come from the adivasi communities (indigenous people); from radical Bhakti/Sufi – Kabir; Nanak, Ravi Dass; Satyasodhak Samaj movement of Phule; innumerable reform movements like Brahma Samaj; the dravidian *self-respect* movement; marriages across caste and religion (Rationalists since the 30s); mass conversion of dalits out of hinduism to neo-Buddhism (50s); Gandhian initiatives. They also come from other initiatives to connect positive streams in different religions; dalit-muslim-OBC (*other backward castes* – all castes that are above dalits but subordinated under brahmanical order) unity building; and so on. They come from the struggles of the worker, dalit, adivasi, peasant, women, socialist and Marxist traditions that have staunchly striven against communalism. Then we of course have *spirituality* that helps us to rise above religious divisiveness when we come together to struggle against our exploitation.

However, this visible and organized resistance is clearly too weak, fragmented and confused. In that case, how is it that we do not have fascist storm troopers running amuck and ruling our culture in every town and village

in the country? What prevents them from doing like Gujarat everywhere? Such considerations help us to *sense* the much vaster, diffuse and invisible traditions and currents of egalitarian spirituality, mutual aid across religious sects, and resistance to sectarian fanaticism. It is this invisible stream of *common compassion* and democracy – the *informal* terrain of anti-communalism that possibly has caused the bulk of the failure, checks and limitations that the communal fascist traditions face.

Our three domains of radical theory learn from the strengths and wisdoms of these positive streams above, their relevance today. We also must learn from the limitations of these streams – their one-sidedness, co-options, ineffectiveness, and failure of interconnecting. This, we need to do locally, at the level of country, sub-continent, South Asia, and also the world. Is not this communalism, a global phenomenon? Is it not deeply connected with the globalisation of Domination?

Then, there are certain problems common to the streams of anti-communalism that are more the concerns of the third domain. These are the problems that enhance communalism. These are created by pollution of power – the expansionism and degeneration inside emancipatory streams. For instance, let us look into the role played by the congress party in the rise of today's communalism. Is it not the degeneration of our anti-colonial, secular, anti-communal, even socialist congress party state that was the vehicle of nationwide demoralization, spiritual and ethical crisis, since the 60s? Did this vacuum not create the ground for the rise of BJP and the Sangha Parivar, with its flag of “resurrection of moral pride in hindutva nationhood”? Has not the decay and degeneration of the socialist and Marxist parties (that came to power subsequently) played a similar role, since the 70s? Similarly, since the 60s, emancipatory streams amongst adivasis and dalits, bahujan and dravidian movements, some of the deepest opponents to brahmanism /caste hierarchy and communalism kept getting fragmented and co-opted, and even sold out to communalist forces.

In our history, consider such a beautiful stream like Kabir's that was never institutionalised or made into a sect. It is said that it entered a phase of fragmenting and becoming ineffective after the death of Kabir.

In fact, the *anti-communal movement* is a stark example of paralyses due to the ravages of opportunism and sectarian power. In our country, overwhelmingly large sections of the society, women, dalits, OBC, dravidian /people outside the *hindi / hindu* belt, adivasis, workers, peasants, minority religions, even large sections of most classes, and their political parties at least take a stand against the extremism of the hindutva militancy. The root social base of the Sangha Parivar is only within the brahmin and business caste in hindus, and that too in the hindi belt and Gujarat, Maharashtra. Then the mystery is, how, from 70s to 90s the hindutva extremists could grow from a tiny maverick entity to rule our central government. Of course, one fundamental reason for this is the deep soil of chauvinism/egotism, the sectarian power drives within organized religions, communally organized people and the centralized/elitist opportunist polity and economy they are embedded in. We are highlighting another major reason here. This is the opportunism and sectarian infighting of the so-called anti-communal political parties, particularly during the phase of the power vacuum created by the exposure and fall of the decadent congress regimes (since 1976) and subsequently the *third front*. Too often, they give more importance to use anti-

communalism to gain prestige/vote and power than to build any long-term campaign, coalition and infrastructure against it. The Sangh Parivar is relatively more united, less fragmented.

Is it not the same story of the rise of fascism everywhere? In fact this infighting, visible or not, bedevils the anti-communal initiatives, even the small ones far from electoral power. Examining these dimensions of the problem is essential to create better mutual enrichment, and not to repeat the pitfalls of the past.

Thus, we have the terrain of cultural/spiritual resistance that is illumined by the anti-communal awareness. However, this must be further lighted up by the awareness of the problems of improving the mutual enrichment of anti-communal currents and groups and avoiding the degeneration due to power politics. These are specially the subjects of the third domain.

Another example of concerns of the third domain

Radical Buddhism in India – the stock taking and introspection we haven't done:

Since the beginning of the last century, it has been mostly the rebellions of the dalits against brahmanism that have been experimenting with Buddhist ideas for emancipation. This has been particularly so in Maharashtra and Tamilnadu. Though we are not well acquainted with these, we will give a sketch *from a distance*, just to illustrate our description of radical theory in three *domains*.

The dalit movement in Maharashtra in the 50s possibly made the largest experiment in engaged Buddhism in the world. Ambedkar added *neo-Buddhism* to the arsenal of dalit social awakening, when six to eight lakh (nearly one million) people came out of the folds of the casteist hinduism. This movement tried to combine a few aspects of change in inner dimension with outer change. Their struggle was their assertion against their material and spiritual exploitation by *brahmanism/caste hierarchy*. It was a social, political and a spiritual movement of its own kind, however partial, to reclaim their dignity and meaning. Such an uncompromising way of raising the dalit perspective had a profound impact all over India that continues till today, and has become even stronger.

Unfortunately, subsequent dalit leadership failed to deepen the movement. Most of the political leadership (Republican Party of India) got co-opted into the establishment politics by 1960s.

The 60s was also a decade of protest against problems of co-option in the establishment and authoritarianism within social movements all over the world. In Bombay, the inner protest against degeneration of the older dalit neo-Buddhist leadership exploded into the outer struggle known as the *Dalit Panther* movement (beginning in 70s). Though we in Bengal did not have the eye to see it at that time, this rocked Maharashtra as much as the *Naxalbari movement* (that symbolized rebellion against co-option of the Marxist left) in Bengal. However within a few years the *Dalit Panther* too sank in the quick sands of various pollution of power.

These frustrations, a vacuum, and on the other side the growth of general dalit awareness saw the rapid rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in North India in the 80s. They roundly blamed the older dalit elite who benefited from the dalit movement; called for a broad alliance of non-brahmanical sections, backward castes and muslim. However this awareness also did not last for a long time. The rapid rise of BSP, unfortunately, could not prevent their getting co-opted in the same old way.

In fact, since then, the stream of the dalit revolts – both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, have been going through the same cycles. They begin with rebellion against the co-opted old leadership. Then, they have their growth and victory. This victory unfortunately is followed by its *fall* and co-option. Then once again begins the journey of new rebellions against the old co-opted ones. This cyclical journey is no different from any other tradition – Marxian, Socialist or Gandhian, adivasi – materialist or spiritual...

Despite all this, within the dalits, as in any other tradition of emancipation, resistance, small scale introspective organizing and visible and invisible connections in alternative ways keep on growing. The flag of revolt keeps getting raised. Many of the new rebellions shun establishment power. They are open and learn from different traditions of liberation including Marxism.

Here, in what we are calling the questions of the *first domain*, we can ask, “In what ways, via what social, economic, political, hierarchal, cultural and spiritual systems, are the dalits exploited?”

The concerns of the *second domain* would be, “Why most of the dalits do not rebel and instead keep getting exploited? How are they socialized to accept and even participate in their oppression? Do the core processes of egotism and hegemony – formation of greed, competition and opportunism, insensitivity, passivity and blind faith – spare the dalit? Why is it easier to make one section of dalits fight another, even riot against other oppressed – like Sikhs and Muslims – rather than getting united against the common enemies?” Then, on the positive side we can ask, “How the dalit communication and critical awareness is growing and breaking out of these crippling conditionings?” All these questions are of great importance even today. We need to build more communication and research on these.

From the perspective and concerns of the *third domain*, we also need to explore the strength and weakness, problems and prospects of dalit resistance, visible and organised as well as invisible and informal. This third domain would like to examine, both positive and negative relationships amongst the dalit initiatives, within dalit spaces. It would also like to examine the same amongst dalit and outside resistance, with other oppressed groups whether they are exploited by economic, gender, or social hierarchy. Thus, many initiatives of dalit awareness have already begun to ask, “Should we not try to introspect, take stock of the revolts so far, their positive sides and also co-options, and seriously ask if we can reduce or avoid the old cycles of rebellion and co-option?” Should we not be asking, “Why do streams differing in so many ways – Marxist, Gandhian, socialist, dravidian or adivasi liberation, go through similar cycles of rise and fall? Should we be just blaming the old *leaders and lines* for all this degeneration and not try to see its seeds within us? We do talk of revolt in culture, religion and inner change. Then, should we not be rebelling against the *religion of egotism, up-climbing, arrogance, obedience and hero/ideology-worship, expansionism, political and monetary?* Can’t we see these as the essence of brahmanism? Can’t all these dress-up as dalit revolt, contaminating us and growing within?”

Such questions are in fact being asked. Such dialogues are beginning to take place. The problem is that they are too scattered and lack connection. In fact we can ask what kind of dialogue do we have at cross-provincial level to review all these experiences. For instance, people of Bengal hardly know of such experiments in Maharashtra, U.P. and Tamilnadu.

We and the Tiep Hien

As we have said earlier, one part of our realizations stem from the experience of the *decade of victory and hope* in 1960s (in Bengal and elsewhere), its *fall* in the 70s and the 80s and the subsequent *living in the era of depression and paralysis*.

During this despair and search, in the 90s, we came across the little booklet on Tiep Hien. We were surprised to find that they so beautifully expressed, as far back in 1964, many of the insights and realizations that we were groping towards. Since then we have been wondering and sharing about Tiep Hien.

During the 60s (and subsequently) a large number of tiny initiatives that tried to address these problems kept emerging in India and Asia. They were beautiful but short-lived. Tiep Hien (64-74) was but one of these *sparkles*.

The question that then arises is, whether these initiatives just died in vain? *We like to see these processes as an ongoing surfacing – learning from the fall, maturing and connecting of streams of rebel compassion and rebellion that are sometimes visible but are mostly invisible.*

As any other positive stream, Tiep Hien too had many limitations

Our use of the word *limitation* should not be seen as some *objective evaluation*. Every stream of emancipation has innumerable specificities rooted in its moment of origin, its socio-psycho-history. Seen from different social spaces these specificities can be felt differently. A *limitation* for some can be an *asset* for another. We feel that Tiep Hien (64 – 74) played a great role in their time and we have many things to learn from them even here, today. We believe that what we are describing as *limitations* are as seen from one point of view. The same can be an *asset* for different types of streams. With this understanding we discuss this issue below.

Tiep Hien (64 – 74) did not categorically differentiate the project of abolition of the establishment from the one of its face-lift, improvement, 'beautification' and legitimisation. They did not differentiate between moving towards full emancipation and *reformism*. Their stand against the state and capitalism was also unclear and ambiguous. We do not know whether they got involved in and supported the economically and socially exploited and oppressed people to organise and fight for their rights in Vietnam or in general. Their sutras were so brief and open-ended that any person in the bureaucracy of vertical (establishment based) welfare/development institutions can today swear by them! In fact, people who are delinking these sutras from the soil of struggle against oppression/imperialism and are replanting them in the *safe haven* within the imperialist nations can possibly end up with a different tree. (See appendix II, p. 216). We emphasize that our *reflections* are not about the Tiep Hien stream after the 1964 -74 period – after they formally dissolved themselves (in 1974). We are not examining CML (the Church of Mindful Living), the 'official Church' of the re-constituted *Tiep Hien* in the US and France since the 80s. We know too little about them.

Tiep Hien (64-74) called so passionately to engage with suffering but less to share the point of view of the oppressed. Their call is to stand for – but not with – the sufferer. They call for compassion for the sufferer, who is mostly the *other* in traditional Buddhism. It remains ambiguous towards those categories of compassion that relate to the suffering rooted in oppression and exploitation for oneself and, others in the same situation. These categories of compassion are crucial. They lead to class/community solidarity, awareness, resistance, revolt and empowerment of the victims. Thus Tiep Hien remain ambiguous as to which side do they take when sufferers organise and struggle for self-emancipation. This is a grave problem.

Can we expect the power of the whole range of Domination/Hierarchy to fall apart by itself? Can some *Buddha* influence and persuade the powerful to give up their privileges? Can some Buddha guide one to detach from the deep traditions of hierarchy within everyone? We believe it is the oppressed that need to take the primary initiative to overcome and create alternatives to Domination. If we confine us to a platform outside the struggle of the oppressed are we not enhancing the same tradition of paternalism, which is one main seed of egotism?

There is something even more problematic. Today, as always, it is mostly the State, exploiting classes, Domination religions and their institutions that do an immense amount of *servicing and protecting the sufferer* (footnote, 12, given in the end), in vertical ways. Lot of positive gains do come out of these, but we have to consider the negative outcomes too.

Domination thus exploits our capacity of compassion and service for our selves and each other and then pours it back to us in a hierarchical and 'normalised' way. This mode of service hides exploitation, State and the so-called 'normal' and civilised society. This legitimises its top-down processes as compassion and spirituality, "Charity, welfare and development", and patriarchal community life. Failing to take clear sides in this situation opens us up to immense pressures to take support from the rich (and their establishment) to 'serve' the deprived. This mostly harnesses our compassion to empower reformism and the 'civilising mission' of Domination.

The fountainhead of concern for Tiep Hien is the directive principle of 'engagement with suffering'. Here a crucial question we will keep bothering about is, 'whose and what kind of suffering we are to engage with'. It might be (as in usual Domination religions) "suffering of others". Sometimes the focus there is also on 'personal suffering'. However, we can read the directive principle as, "*Engaging with the suffering of others, our selves, and also all the categories of suffering that are common to people as victims, as exploited, deprived and also oppressed*".

Tiep Hien sutras often emphasise more on the problems (of power pollution) that emerge as the emancipatory struggles of the oppressed expand. But they emphasise very little on the positive need of the oppressed to organise and expand their movements. Do not the oppressed need to build up struggles and organizations to empower themselves and overcome their victimization? Moreover, it is extremely difficult for the oppressed to rise with effectiveness without *one-sidedness* (prioritising their certain needs over others). Often they need to have an intense commitment to expand their struggle. In our world, this usually can entail creating some hierarchy, and dependency on some authority. This is all the more if the oppressed are facing extreme deprivation of economic and democratic spaces and if they lack traditions of autonomy and broader connectivity. Is it not necessary to be

supportive towards such struggles that are associated with some amount of problem of *pollution of power*? What is important is, how to support their positive sides and reduce their negative sides at *the same time*. (footnote, 13, given in the end)

Of course, during 1964-74, Tiep Hien may not have been so clear in their sutras but their life was clear enough. It was a categorical taking of a side. Were the people who constituted Tiep Hien, not oppressed or colonised? Building anti-war coalition with hierarchical and authoritarian organisations, which ranged from Dominational religions to those led by Marxists – they resisted and struggled against the oppressor in blazing defiance.

On the other side, look at Marxism that takes the side of the oppressed and has an appropriate class analyses. Does it prevent it from constantly falling into the traps of Domination? Similar is the situation with all other traditions of liberation based on the outlook and resistance of specific categories of the oppressed. There are problems everywhere. Here we are advocating a point of view that strives to nurture and connect the positive sides of all streams, those specific to victims and as well as the generalised ones, like the best of Tiep Hien.

Most emancipatory streams associated with religion emphasise that, “*Inner change; struggling against egotism within the self and being sensitive towards the sufferer should become the central theme of living*”. Though less frequently, streams similar to Tiep Hien also call for striving against acquiring *name, fame, power and wealth* for their individuals and institutions. On the other side of the emancipatory spectrum, innumerable streams call for *outer change*, of overthrowing exploitative social systems. Currents of socialism call for struggling against imperialism and capitalism, dalit streams stand against varna/caste system, the struggles of women against patriarchy. In other words, all these streams stand against the material/social roots of suffering that get organised via the various *outer social structures*. *In Tiep Hien we find a stream that believes in combining both inner and the outer change.* It is like walking on fire and water at the same time.

They call for inner change. But unlike most mainstream religions, their concept of inner change is, “No detachment, but go all out into the turmoil of suffering; and then struggle against its roots in the outer society, and also within our inner self”. As they struggle for outer change, their *inner change* rather calls for detachment from the potential *seeds of Domination* – power, glory, blind desire for security and anchor of all kinds. Tiep Hien believe that one has to become conscious of and strive to reduce the anchors (vertical authorities – however radical) and yet be connected with the positive streams of the struggle.

Tiep Hien rather open a window to meditate upon the problem of the gap, block and conflict amongst streams of inner and outer change. Their central quest in understanding is to reflect upon this fracture in the world of emancipation and consider how it is healed.

This is what they lived and died for. Putting everything they had, they struggled against possibly the harshest war of imperialism in Asia, where more bombs were dropped than during the whole of 2nd world war!

THE PURPOSE OF OUR REFLECTION IS NOT TO PREACH, *EXPLAIN* OR *READ* THE TIEP HIEN SUTRAS

We have no intention of *reading* these sutras as a text in itself. We believe that we cannot de-link the fourteen sutras they wrote from the *sutra* that was their life and death **in the forefront of the struggle against war and imperialism. Can we understand these sutras if taken out of the soil of the fiery 64-74 Vietnam and the world, and also the life and outlook of the original Tiep Hien community?**

Our purpose here is not to analyse or understand the Tiep Hien (64 – 74) movement as such. It is rather an attempt to look through their *windows* and place our realisations along with the insight offered by the struggles of Tiep Hien.

Thus in this write up we have avoided discussing the limitations of the sutras (except one or two places). *Instead, in our write-up we use ‘tiep hien’ as the symbol of the best of the radical 60s, the best of Tiep Hien spirit and our realizations since then.* When we use words like “tiep hien mean or say ...” we mostly mean *our tiep hien* as a conceptual symbol. The Tiep Hien of the 64-74 might or might not have meant this.

Thus, though it is confusing, we have ended up using the word Tiep Hien to mean three different though overlapping entities. Firstly Tiep Hien with the bracket (64 – 74) means to us their stream in struggle against imperialism and aggression in Vietnam. Then we have the Tiep Hien label that is used by certain organisations today in the USA who are involved in printing, publishing and disseminating the text we are using. When we have used Tiep Hien in this sense, which we have done rarely, we have tried to mention it. Lastly is *our tiep hien* or just tiep hien, as we are re-defining it in our write-up.

Certain tendencies (like in the text by Parallax Press that we are using) used the word *interbeing* as a rough representation of their concept of Tiep Hien in English language. This meaning is rooted in the classical Buddhist paradigm. This sees everything in society and Nature as more than in symbiosis, as a dense eco-system. Here, each entity that we see as separate is actually a complex of interwoven processes and patterns that are more than connected and interdependent – always creating yet strengthening the uniqueness of each entity – in the whole society and Nature.

In our write-up, we are using this word *interbeing* a bit differently. Our ‘interbeing’ tries to represent our tiep hien as we described above. Our *interbeing* is not attached to some particular philosophy. Since 50s and 60s, understanding from various disciplines and traditions, like field theory in physics, systems theory from biology, cybernetics, ecological sciences, post-structuralist philosophy, radical streams from Buddhism and other Eastern traditions, emergence of ecology movement and so on were spreading into the spaces of emancipatory awareness. So, we use the concepts like *interbeing* or ecosystem in a broad and flexible way. These might be eco-systems that are nested or connected, complex of processes and structures, patterns and connections, interdependent and also autonomous and bounded. These concepts must be specific and appropriate to the area of our concern.

Our view flows from commitment for the sufferer. Our view is dedicated to emancipation, struggle against establishment, Domination and Hierarchy – particularly all exploitation and suffocation of our material, social and

cultural resources that create or enhance the bulk of the world's suffering. *Our interbeing* is to be organised by these above commitments. Hence, it is narrow and partisan as compared to its usual meaning in Buddhism that does not *take sides*.

Thus *our interbeing* does see society and Nature as made up of structures and streams that *are not only interdependent but also inter-creating*. However, we further see these currents, streams, connections, patterns and various *interbeing* as *negative* and *positive*— as enhancing or reducing the (negative) power of the establishment, the capitalist mode of production and its politics and also Domination/Hierarchy of all kinds, and their *soil and seeds*. Also our *negative* and positive currents/connections/patterns and the various *interbeing* are not just some wisdom to be realised and meditated upon and to guide our action. But these are the *interbeing* of action, witnessing, contemplating, living and striving – dedicated to break the negative processes. Above all, it is an attitude to feel for and nurture friendship connection and caring among positive currents flowing via persons, initiatives (however fleeting), clusters and social organisations. We are trying to explore and express these concepts of our *tiep hien* and *our interbeing* throughout our write-up.

Furthermore, our purpose here is not to expound a specific tradition of activism or philosophy. Our presentation of *interbeing* is more an appeal, to get in touch with concerned friends. It is to improve networking so as to put together, exchange and articulate certain feelings and visions, realisations and conceptual tools that are widespread but scattered and unconnected so much that they are almost invisible today. We are calling these diffuse concerns, orientations and realisations as the *third domain*. This is to reduce certain core problems of our *engagement with suffering and our opposition to Domination and Hierarchy*.

On one side, in this write-up we take a stand against those streams of *organised* (institutional) Buddhism that supported ancient empires and modern capitalism all over Asia. On the other side, we are also critiquing mainstream organised Marxism - its tendency to get embroiled in sectarian expansionism and become another establishment. In fact we are trying to explore the common grounds in such different critiques.

Our view “does not recognise (as The Truth) any systematic arrangement (of any group of sutras) ... as proposed by various schools of Buddhism” – even *engaged* (– Tiep Hien, 64, Foundation statement, Part – C, p.); or of Marxism, socialism, anarchism or Phule, Gandhism, Peryiar or Ambedkar.

Thus ours is primarily an appeal to search and get connected with friends who are feeling and looking at things in a similar way, believing that —

- ***Upholding friendships and sensitivity for all beings; "deepening the streams of mutual aid, equality and love are also currents and connections of emancipation";***
- ***Emancipatory and beautiful initiatives must stand against all kinds of Establishments (the outer roots of much of our suffering) and at the same time also against 'pollution of power', co-option into the system, and egotism/ dependency inside us – the inner seeds and soil of the oppressive orders;***

- ***Holism as the nurturing of the interbeing of positive currents within emancipatory streams, however different they are from ours — organised as well as the invisible and informal; nursing friendship connections between emancipatory initiatives, persons and movements.***

FOOTNOTES FOR 'INTRODUCTION' (GIVEN IN THE END)

1. In post-revolutionary societies, absolute poverty may be growing less, but exploitation, suffocation, Statism and 'capitalism' keep growing. Then health of democracy and opposition collapses and often the most lumpen forms of capitalism sweep in.
2. For details see, "Radical Ecology"
3. Hegemony usually means the political, social, cultural stranglehold, conditioning and indoctrination of the mind, life, the whole being of the oppressed by the external dominant System. It means also the imposition of the values, meaning and culture of the ruling classes within the subordinated people.
In the Tiep Hien, radical Buddhist and post-Freudian traditions, the concept that is closest to hegemony can be called the 'seeds and soil' of the oppressive normal order. These 'seeds and soil' are mostly created by Domination, but these negative patterns also flow independently within our psyche and relationships, at the conscious, sub-conscious, unconscious – personal and collective levels. These are also related to our negative ego/dependency/insecurity/ the hidden fear of loss — the crisis of death. Thus, it is a complex, two-way relationship. These 'seeds and soil' have a role in creating the poisonous trees and forest of Domination. Lastly, hegemony is also the immense eco-system associated with hierarchy, power relations and negative desires. These patterns and currents are largely invisible. They emerge, connect and flow via the micro and societal levels of mind, in the terrains of conscious, subconscious, social/collective unconscious. This eco-system, like a poisonous and living mist, engulfs everybody, the oppressor and also the oppressed. In our write-up, we will use *hegemony* more in this context.
4. In Asia, mainstream Marxism remained, till 70s, the authoritarian and State bureaucratic 'Marxism' of the tradition of Lenin, Stalin and Mao. Then (since 70s), it became in addition quite brazenly capitalist in content though remaining 'Marxist' in words. This mainstream remains so prevalent and powerful even today that when we use the word Marxism, we mean this 'official' mainstream Marxism. The non-mainstream and unofficial mini currents of egalitarian Marxism do grow and learn from the crisis and development of emancipatory traditions in the world. However, these streams are connected very feebly to each other. Their presence is mostly as individuals, little magazines, small groups and in academia or art. In fact these are present much more as fragmented realisations all around.
5. We (compilers of these notes) are mostly ignorant about the dravidian self-respect movement in South India led by E.V. Ramaswamy Naiker (Peryiar). We hardly know anything about the introspection and rethinking that must have arisen there subsequent to its decay and degeneration since the 60s. So we will not talk about it.

6. The dravidian 'self-respect' (non-Brahmanical, rationalist) movement in South India was possibly the largest movement against social (casteist/racist) hierarchy and chauvinism in India.

7. See the acrimonious polemic by Gandhi against Ambedkar who represented the more radical current in the dalit streams. The 'ego-clash between these two sister streams' became so deep that even though Gandhi the individual began to change his position after 1944, agreeing that Ambedkar was basically correct, (for instance on the imperative need to abolish varna/caste system) the Gandhiite streams never supported the struggle of the dalits to overcome hinduism.
 - **See Mark Lindley, "How Gandhi came to believe caste must be dismantled by intermarriage"; Centre for Gandhian Studies, University of Kerala, Trivendrum.**

8. Though enmeshed in Domination (complexed and grey) each small and beautiful initiative plays a significant role in the struggle against Domination. Sometimes visibly and mostly invisibly. On the other side beautiful initiatives sponsored by or too much co-opted into Domination bring forth the legitimisation of the same. Here although connecting some positive currents, these initiatives also play a significant role in giving empowerment to the System and hegemony. Mostly these beautiful initiatives are independent, they grow on there own but are later co-opted into Domination. Many such initiatives also remain emancipated and directly play a role in the struggle against Domination.

9. Though we need to elaborate upon, here we are not examining these complex and grey processes and problems. They belong more to the first and second domain. We are touching upon them just to introduce the gravity of the need of cultural/social rebellion.

10. As an example of such alienation and the resultant crisis and misery of human beings, refer to the note '*France's heat wave*' (By, Vaiju Naravane, 'The Hindu', Sept. 2, 2003, referred also in our p.):
 - "Hundreds of bodies are lying unclaimed in morgues across France, especially in Paris. The dead are all victims of the recent heat wave that killed over 11,000 people. They lie there more than a fortnight after they died because their relatives are unwilling to interrupt their holidays in order to give granny, father, mother or aunt a decent burial. ...
 - How it is possible that in a country that boasts of one of the most advanced and comprehensive healthcare systems in the world, over 10,000 people are allowed to die in a matter of days?
 - Reduced legal working hours have given the French the type of leisure others can only dream of. The entire country shuts down, especially in August when driving in Paris is like going through a ghost town ... as the French head out to holiday centres for fun and sun, sea and sand. ...
 - When the heat wave struck most families were on holiday. Many of their elderly relatives had been left behind in old age homes. There were not enough policemen or firemen, ambulance drivers, retirement home attendants, nurses or doctors to respond to the emergency as more and more elderly began falling ill as a result of the heat. ...

But there are other reasons of a social and psychological nature. The nuclear family is exploding. Parents often tell children to leave the family home once they have reached 18 years of age when parent's legal responsibility for their offspring come to an end. When the parents grow old the children pay them back in the same currency.

I know of a woman who refused to claim her grandmother's body. "Let her rot. She was selfish, mean and cruel. She showed me no love, no warmth, no generosity. Why should I be expected to do something now she is dead?"

Note how the intensity of the crisis is even unsettling and corroding from inside one of the deepest base of Domination/Hierarchy~ the tradition of patriarchal family. Will not such a crisis~ alien and unacceptable existential situation~ inevitably give rise to resistance and alternatives?

11. Lacking a better word, we have used the word 'humanity'. By this we mean 'positive interbeing', that is realizing our deep link and respect for all beings and Nature, and creating our autonomy in this context.
12. Here we are not going into discussion or critiquing those movements of reform like that of Vidyasagar, Rabindranath (leading social reformers originating from the upper class and caste in Bengal in the early 20th century) and so many other such streams. These movements contain vital positive streams.
13. In fact the problem becomes exceedingly difficult but is most important, when we as exploited, have to do both. That is, we have to empower ourselves, and not embark upon a path that can make us part of Dominations in the future.

ORIGINAL TEXT - PART- A

INTRODUCTION – by Fred Eppsteiner (Editor)

The fourteen precepts of the Tiep Hien Order are a unique expression of traditional Buddhist morality coming to terms with contemporary issues. Secluded monks attempting to update traditional Buddhist Precepts did not develop these precepts. Rather, they were forged in the crucible of war and devastation that was the daily experience for many Southeast Asians during the past several decades.

Responding to burgeoning hatred, intolerance and suffering, a group of Buddhists, many deeply grounded in Buddhist philosophy and meditation, founded an Order to become an instrument of their vision of engaged Buddhism. Composed of monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, the Tiep Hien Order never comprised great numbers, yet its influence and effect were deeply felt within their country. Highly motivated and deeply committed, members of the Order and their supporters organised anti-war demonstrations, printed leaflets and books, ran social service projects, organised an underground for draft resisters, and cared for many of the war's suffering, innocent victims. During the war, many members and supporters died, some from self-immolation some from cold-blooded murder, and some from the indiscriminate murder of war. At this time, it is impossible to say whether any remnant of the Order still exists in Asia, even though several members did emigrate to the West. Yet these Fourteen Precepts that they recited weekly, while war, political repression and immense suffering tore apart their familiar world are now being offered to us.

About the Editor:

Fred Eppsteiner is the director of an outpatient mental health clinic. He is past president of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and editor of its newsletter, and the editor of a book of contemporary writings on engaged Buddhism, entitled *The Path of Compassion* (Parallax, 1987).

END OF ORIGINAL TEXT - PART- A

FROM SOARING HOPE TO THE *FALL*

A GLIMPSE INTO THE JOURNEY OF RADICAL DREAMS IN ASIA FROM 60s TO 70s

Red Sun Rises In the East

For many of us, Marxist egalitarians of the sixties, the Russian dream had turned into a nightmare. Who could hide from the savagery in Eastern Europe? Like sinking people, we fervently clutched on to the GPCR (*Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*) and Mao in China. We believed that this, from within, would cleanse our communism of all problems of *Pollution of Power* and solve the problem of revolutions degenerating into systems like the Soviet State. We saw in it the *rising of the red sun* in the East. On the other side the Liberation war in Vietnam gave legitimacy to our new dream. During 64 –74, Vietnam had become the conscience of the world. More bombs were dropped there than in the entire Second World War, but the liberation movement kept growing.

Buddhist Peace Movement in the Liberation Struggle:

In Vietnam, the media highlighted either the hi-tech might of US war machine or the spectacular victories of the Marxist led NLF (National Liberation Front). However, two other movements were also fighting the war - the anti-war movement in the US (one of the largest movement in US history where millions of young people were protesting) and the Buddhist led multi-religious coalition peace movement (initiated by Tiep Hien and others) in occupied areas of Vietnam. While the anti-War movement in U.S. got some press coverage, the one in Vietnam remained practically unknown (in our country).

NLF struggles obviously played a crucial role in defeating the American war. But this was not the whole story. We realised much later that the NLF by itself could have got into a cold-war deadlock. US war industry saw the victories of the NLF as God-sent in enlarging the cold-war paranoia and war market.

Mainstream media could easily defame NLF by saying, “Is it not the arm of the same *red Imperialists* who are doing genocide on religious people and others from East Europe to Tibet?”

The success of Tiep Hien in building a united Buddhist and multi-religious peace movement must have played a key role in helping to break this deadlock. Mass demonstration of Buddhists defying military crackdowns, self-immolation of monks - calmly sitting in protest, helped to defeat the mainstream media (we still cannot forget those pictures). It was perhaps a key factor in rousing public opinion and anti-war activism in US, and rest of the world. Martin Luther King nominated Thich Nhat Than (one founder of Tiep Hien) for Nobel Peace.

The President's lobby (in US) decided to stop the war only when it saw the voters getting angry. This was how anti-war movement in U.S. played a crucial role in connecting and projecting the anti-war feelings there. It could offset the propaganda of war lobby to justify and escalate the war.

However, at that time and even now, we hardly know anything about streams in Buddhism that had created such a magnificent movement. This booklet gave us the first glimpse, some 30 years later!

The Fall

Red 60s was followed by a decade of absurd and terrifying tragedy in South East Asia. On the one side the 30-year-old movement against colonialism won in Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea in early 70s. But this unleashed a chain of internecine blood baths that we could never have imagined earlier! "Confused armies were fighting in the night" – all fervently believing in the Liberation. The Khmer Rouge, utterly committed "to leap towards communism", created a savage and despotic regime unprecedented in Kampuchea. Then, this Kampuchean State was attacked and overrun by Vietnamese State. After that, Chinese *red army* fought a gory war against Vietnamese *red army* in Kampuchea. Sino-Soviet hostilities boiled over... GPCR brought large scale, authoritarian and oppressive violence in China. Its aftermath brought a 'Marxist order' more brazenly capitalist, Statist and hierarchical than before!

Possibly around fifty to one hundred thousand volunteers killed each other in South East Asia in a very short time, after independence and revolution. All of them possibly believed that they were upholding communism, and liberating people from 'bogus' communists. Soon, *all* their leaders were wooing the US multinationals and lobbying for World Bank loans! We in Bengal were shocked when the Vietnamese revolution of our dream became the first government in the world to congratulate Indira Gandhi's imposition of the draconian *Emergency rule* in 1975.

McNamara, the secretary of the US war department (Pentagon), resigned and became the Chief of World Bank after the Vietnam War. As a result of this, World Bank (USA's policy of exploiting South using economic means) overcame Pentagon (the war lobby). Thus began the era of globalisation - the strategic shift from emphasis on guns to management of *suffering* by capitalist market, *welfare and development*. Tamed anti-colonialists and socialist bosses of all hues were jumping enthusiastically in this bandwagon.

Our Fall –From Vietnam to Bengal

Since 60s, the *left* in Bengal grew to become an immense popular force. It could win government (election) power, briefly in 67, and permanently since 77 (going strong till today). Alongside came the similar epidemic of co-option and decay. Radical opposition to all this got trapped into left sectarian militancy and infighting. This only served to create a wholesale degeneration, paralyses and co-option of radical resistance and life since the 70s.

Understandably since then, we from the radical (anti-establishment) Marxist tradition are in a state of shock – for the last three decades. This is particularly so in places like urban Bengal where we too had our ‘magnificent victories’, mega-dreams and the subsequent implosion and degeneration in the 60s and 70s. In fact, all over Asia, we failed to build up any significant resistance or hope after the 70s.

There is something that feels terribly similar in all these varieties of problems – authoritarianism /dependency, insensitivity, infighting and finally burnout, paralyses and co-option. These problems may occur in howsoever-different times and places – Russia in 20s, China in 50s, Vietnam or Bengal. There is something so common amongst them. Can we explain all these problems wholly as, “*They* had bad leaders/theory/practice/tradition”? We may as well ask, “Why do such ‘bad leaders and wrong theory’ always tend to emerge and overwhelm us? Could this also not be due to something more pervasive, something we do not like to see, something we do not have the language to express now?”

Looking Within the Spaces of Social Movements

Colours of Despair — The Epidemic of Pollution of Power Within

One aspect of all these problems can be called the *Pollution of Power*. Is this aspect confined to the Marxists alone? Marxist traditions are surely not the sole root of this problem! In India, major organized egalitarian traditions like the Marxist, Gandhian, socialist, dalit, adivasi emancipation and their innumerable sub-traditions, each would blame the *other* as the source of all these problems! In fact looking at it as *Other People’s Problem* is one of the main problems (what is known as the *OPP block*). This kind of manipulation (by currents of Domination /Hegemony flowing inside) of our sub-conscious (our egotism at organisational and personal levels) hides the *epidemic* within.

A BRIEF LOOK AT THE NON-MARXISTS; GANDHIITE, DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS AND RELATED TRADITIONS:

From 1936, it was becoming clear that the Gandhian socialist traditions (Indian parallels to anarcho-pacifists and social-democrats in the West) were weak on the questions of economic exploitation, varna/caste hierarchy, class dimensions, co-option into Establishment, paternalism, authoritarianism within the movements. Since their large-scale co-option after 1946 (– national Independence), Lohia grouped the Gandhians as *Sarkari* (co-opted in government); *Mathi* (Ashram-ites, dropouts from struggle against oppression - now NGOs supported by establishment); and *Kujat* (anti-establishment heretics who are oriented towards struggle).

Sub-traditions of Gandhians like Vinoba Bhave-ites even took a stance like anarchists, opposing a main road to centralism, party-politics and participation in the electoral process. Unfortunately, the prominent ones amongst them would degenerate even more rapidly (in most cases) into *Sarkari* (government supported), upper classiest, casteist, and *Mathi* bureaucratic centralism.

Eventually, the Kujats of 1950s and 60s, who had rebelled against co-option at that time, were fully co-opted by '77 (soon after the victory of the Janata Dal). New Kujats came up in 70s (Rise of *Chhatra Yuva Sangharsha Vahini* in Bihar, *YUKRANT* in Maharashtra). Most of them became *Sarkari* and *Mathi* again and the cycle went on... Of course still newer generations of *Kujats* - co-ordinations like *Kisan-Adivasi Sangathan* (Samajwadi Jan Parishad) or positive currents within Narmada Bachao Andolan and within *National Alliance of People's Movements* keep coming up again and again.

POLLUTION OF POWER WITHIN IS EVERYWHERE, AND GROWS WITH VICTORIES IN STRUGGLES

We have been seeing innumerable similar revolts going on since the 60s, against co-option and bossism inside all emancipatory traditions. We would also see their subsequent stupefaction and surrender. This has kept on repeating *ad-nauseam* as in an absurd drama. It continues to happen in such different and far-flung traditions like Jharkhand movement of adivasis (indigenous people), bahujan / dravidian / dalit struggles, worker's and peasant's movements and so on.

We now realise that the experience of any specific type of oppression and struggle (say as of the worker) by itself might or might not create sensitivity against oppression of different types (for example, the oppression by patriarchy or casteism). It might not even create awareness against hierarchies within its own category. *Most of the time, the gains one oppressed group gets as a result of its struggles, gets divided unequally with the already advantaged ones (within the oppressed) getting more.* Thereby, the hierarchies within that oppressed group grow. In a similar way, the existing inequality between different oppressed groups might increase too. These hierarchies may be based on economic/class /sub-class differences, gender, caste, ethnicity, elitism, education, smartness, *able-ness*, management skills and so on. Thus, as the struggles of communities or organisations become more successful, all their hierarchies inside and rivalries with those outside get heightened.

Marx said that History is mostly that of class struggles. However, as the oppressed get some empowerment, hierarchy and norms of Domination begin to spread within more and more. **Thus, history seems to also be the co-option into the establishment of the elite within the emancipatory struggle.** This Establishment may be the old one or it might be a new one created by victory of the emancipation.

WHY should this be so? Why should our anti-establishment activism that originated out of respect for others, and ourselves empathy, co-operation and friendship, have such noxious end products? Why should the growth of movements not lead to a strengthening of their root values? People build organizations. Why do these then trample the people? We were fighting *against* accumulation and competition for power, prestige, social and material resources of the world. Why should these drives infiltrate and engulf us from inside? How was it that we ourselves become a part of all this?

This is a fundamental vicious circle in which all our traditions get enmeshed. The values, desires, methods and paradigms of the establishment seep through thousands of invisible ways into spaces of the opposition. Our feelings are manipulated, dreams turned upside down, relationships and thoughts altered. Clearly, the seeds, soil and norms of Domination/Hierarchy are deep within us as are those of emancipation. Hegemony and egotism masquerades and legitimises itself as *science*, *ethics* and our *eyes*. It infects our culture, relationships, and traditions. It can hide as Gandhian de-centralisation and pacifism. This egotism/hegemony can disguise itself even as the Maoist *Cultural Revolution against egotism / hegemony*. This realisation exploded in our face in the period after the heady and innocent 60s. We did not have any idea of what could be done.

At macro-level, co-option into establishment is most visible. At the level of small groups far from State power, paternalistic power pyramids and sectarian rivalry is often the bane of our life. **Within the life of the organisation, erosion of compassion, empathy, affection and solidarity in the long run, is omnipresent.**

This happens all around the world. Marxist or Gandhian, bahujan / dravidian / dalit /adivasis or black liberationist, anarchist and feminist traditions – all are infected – more or less.

As for example, anarchist currents have been the most fervent critique of authoritarianism amongst different streams of emancipation most visible in Europe since 19th century. By the 60s they were posing the gravity of such problems inside spaces of anarchist movement too. One example from the writings of *SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL (62 – 72) Paris*:

[93] The anarchists, who distinguish themselves explicitly from the rest of the worker's movement by their ideological conviction, reproduce this separation of competence among themselves; they provide a favourable ground for the informal domination over every anarchist organisation by propagandists and defenders of their own ideology, specialists who are generally more mediocre the more their intellectual activity strives to repeat certain definitive truths. Ideological respect for unanimity of decisions has on the whole been favourable to the uncontrolled authority, within the organisation itself, of specialists in freedom; and revolutionary anarchism expects the same type of unanimity from the liberated population, obtained by the same means.

(For more details about their insights, see, end-note B, Part – B)

[From, **THE SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE – 1967, PARIS**]

The West German Green Party, or the faith and God oriented Christian socialist traditions in Latin America - all suffer from it. Thus, listen to Petra Kelly's cry of despair, shortly before she committed suicide (or was murdered?):

"The essence of Green politics is to live our values. We in the West German Green Party hurt ourselves over and over again by failing to maintain tenderness with each other as we gained power. We need to re-dedicate ourselves to our values,

respect each other, to be tolerant of differences, and stop trying to coerce and control one another."

Interestingly, we found this in a Buddhist socialist report from distant Thailand!

Tiny Bells Chime in this Desert Storm

FALL AND DISILLUSIONMENT – FOR ALL OF US

The quest for liberation has undergone a sea change since the innocent optimism of the 60s. This has not only happened in the organised and declared streams of social change where “the *fall*” created such despair, but also in the terrain of “ordinary people’s lives”. Though their journeys were different, yet in living through intense experiences of disillusionment, they/their streams too sometimes kept arriving at similar insights.

Most of us as *ordinary* people have always been dreaming and striving for positive human relationships, authenticity and meaningful flourishing. But time and again, we get caught into the web of this ‘civilisation’, with its illusory promise, “Everybody can live one’s dream; be beautiful and strong; there is a sunrise at the end of history.” Yet sooner or later our dreams get broken and we meet our despair. We also come to realize the hollowness of these promises. Then, we again run towards so many mirages and “highways” – the ideal romance/ family /church, the market of spirituality, the ‘good’ institutions and ‘business’ of social work, the identity of mental patient and the chemical oblivions. Yet none of them can fill our void.

In our confusion, some of us return to the old dreams of organised liberation. But there too we encounter a sense of demoralisation. In fact it is in this ocean of mirages and despair of *ordinary* life that the rivers of dropouts from the sector of organised movement join.

We are buried today in the macabre war between consumerist and spectacular capitalism with its ‘God’ of greed /emptiness of the market, and fundamentalists who are fighting for ‘values’ and ‘spirituality’ (with authoritarian/sectarian aspects as in medieval times). There is no place for shelter. Egotism and hegemony savages us everywhere, our social spaces, intimate relationships, political organisations (Marxist or Gandhiite or whatever). Our *eye* tries to create *meaning* and *hope* in such an ocean of despair - material and spiritual suffering, where personal and social lives are so densely linked.

With a similar dream there are some amongst us from the *informal* terrain, who somehow begin to believe themselves to be ‘full individuals’. A chimera of strength and emancipation surrounds us. As individuals we begin to believe in our individuality and choice. It is our *fall* from *here*, at the crossing, when we come to see that we are the sophisticated products of Domination, its modern, ‘progressive’ spectacle. We are in no way stronger than the ones who got little space for self-assertion, those we saw as subservient to Domination. We begin to realise that what we see as ‘my choice’, is actually the given of Domination to *my being*. Hence we encounter the illusory aspects of our emancipation and the microscopic parts of our being that are knotted within conditions of Domination. We realise that we all are ordinary, and have to struggle against our egotism, conditioning within, and Domination outside as any next person *out there*. We also realise that even when given *space*, we as vulnerable people might not stand for truth or liberation around and within us. This

realisation of our helplessness/vulnerability is similar to that of the have-not where identification with our ordinariness is concerned. But it is very different from the kind of helplessness one faces as a have-not who is even denied the minimum material and social space to grow and to assert and hence becomes subservient to 'his/her' condition.

The *fall* of the individual and the subsequent dissociation within the *self* takes the individual to a point of disintegration — alienation, where 's/he' begins to understand life as even more absurd. Here the earlier quest for the betterment of the society and the quest to understand and struggle with oneself intermingle. However, now it comes with more humility, empathy, ordinariness and a faith in togetherness and positive interrelatedness. A rebellion, a struggle for the collective as connectedness here is, to some extent self-chosen, rather than a given wisdom.

DEALING WITH DESPAIR

Consider the life and time of Tiep Hien (64 – 74). The most barbaric neo-colonialism and war of history were being opposed by a budding totalitarian tradition. It was apparent that it would deny freedom to streams like Tiep Hien when it would come to power! (Footnote – 1, given in the end of 'Part – A') Living in between this blending crossfire, theirs must have been a precocious cry. And did they not know that most of them would die? In such a time they were saying to themselves — "Let us not try to escape from this despair. We need to face it and not create defences. We need to go *into* suffering -our own and those of all other beings. Let us not try to escape by hiding behind *anchors* – *Our Dhamma, Buddha or Sangha*. We must accept the limitations of all anchors. Otherwise, such *faith*, such *shortcuts to security* will always blind and divide us, opening us up to egotism and power trips."

What does *awareness/striving to go beyond anchors, accepting the emptiness* mean? In our context it means recognising the reality of Domination outside and also inside our minds. It means, recognising that we are weak, vulnerable and mostly succumb to Domination, despite our struggle against it. Much of our mind, our instinct, spontaneity, our being, gets organised by Domination. **It means accepting that all our *Marx, Gandhi or Ambedkar/Peryiar, Christ, Buddha, Ram or Muhammad, our consciousness, science or conscience* – any force and fountainhead of goodness we might chose, can get manipulated by negative social currents.** It means giving up the bipolar worldview of *we* (the progressive/ethicist/correct vanguards) vs. *them* (the enemy, somewhere out there...).

Such understanding, like our *fall* from the peak of faith and clarity, gives rise to profound uncertainty, insecurity, despair, disintegration and guilt. **But denying this, our own vulnerability and culpability, would mean failing to see through the games that negative streams of Domination play.**

Will not such uncertainty paralyse us? Rather Tiep Hien are saying that the paralysis is due to our creating anchors, (over-dependency on Guardians or our individual self, such blinding faiths, hopes and ideas), its power tripping and its breakdown and co-option. Tiep Hien appeal to us for learning to accept the insecurity, the sadness of being orphans in a grey world. Such acceptance would help us learn to grope on our own; team up, not with *guardians* but with friends; develop mutual interdependence and self-sufficiency. Then we can

connect better with the world of positive streams. We can rebel more critically. This is their offering of the stream of positive interbeing, the nourishment to act.

The struggle to disentangle ourselves from anchors; thereby encountering the space of emptiness; towards the gateway of togetherness; we/our positive streams traverse in connectedness. Thus this journey towards emptiness is not a journey of aloneness but a path of connectedness.

A Philosophy that emerges from Tiep Hien

INTRODUCTION

There were voices and philosophies of dissent from the time Dominational religions (Footnote – 2, given in the end of 'Part – A') were propping up establishments of inequalities. People were rebelling against exploitation of their material and spiritual resources both. People from the 'lower stratum / castes' were rejecting the monopoly of 'official' priests, scriptures and 'holy theory' to tell them what was religion. They were demanding the right to interpret ethics, meaning, spirituality and God in their own way, according to their feelings and realisations (Footnote – 3, given in the end of 'Part – A'). Lay christians were demanding the right to interpret Jesus; lay Buddhist's demand was to interpret Dhamma. Agnostics, atheists and heretics were exposing the tricks of Dominational religion. Utopian and other socialists were struggling to form their own self-sufficient communities. These rebellions clearly understood much of the *social engineering* by the establishment, the relationship between the outer structures of oppression and inner traditions of living. The rebels were trying to change connections, re-canalise and reclaim the flow of streams of material and social/spiritual power and culture, labels/icons and traditions of ways of getting together, and 'holy'/celebrated words (at the different levels of personal and social living).

In the middle of 19th century, Marxist and similar sister scientific socialist traditions threw open the role of the visible material structures of Domination behind these hierarchical traditions and personal lives. They saw organised struggles to uproot the material, economic/political structures as primary. The struggle to reclaim power at the level of personal/community life, culture and spirituality became secondary to them. Moreover, the diffuse world of small change, unconnected acts of resistance and compassion became invisible and secondary to them.

This led to a split amongst the emancipatory traditions. Now, on one extreme were those who considered change within the *outer* material structures as primary and, on the other, those for whom the stream of culture and sociality, personal and community life, the *inner* world was the essence. These different approaches became powerful and centralised traditions, and got more and more conflicted against each other. This war paralysed emancipatory traditions for nearly a hundred year.

Since 1950s and 60s emancipatory streams closer to spirituality (like many radical currents within the christian socialist, engaged Buddhists, Gandhians, socialist traditions and others) have been grasping better the crucial role of *material structures* of Domination. On the other side, some amongst *scientific* socialist

traditions have started realising the non-secondary role of streams of culture, personal and social life. This convergence, we somewhere feel, is creating a *paradigm shift* that is crucial for an egalitarian emancipation. Thus many streams like Tiep Hien (of 64-74) began emerging. Tiep Hien gave primacy to both – the material structures (the *trees*), and the invisible currents at *inner*, psychic, cultural, personal and social levels – what they call the *soil and seeds*.

The Conceptual Eye of Interbeing

Domination is not just visible material structures. Domination is also constituted by but also systems and processes of mostly invisible currents /connections/ patterns and traditions flowing in the psychic /personal /relational/ social levels of society and the biosphere. They are all intermeshed. Likewise, resistance is not just solid-like visible organisations and movements but mostly processes of invisible currents /connections/ patterns of flowing streams. Here we are using symbolic pictures /metaphors like *ocean* and *eco-system* that we will illustrate by repeated examples.

[For a little more detailed introduction to this kind of *eco-systemic and interbeing* outlook, see, in the “Resource Appendix III” given in the end of our write-up,

“Eco-systemic or *interbeing* way of looking at everything: 1. Self And Compassion In Engaged Buddhist Philosophy – THE GREENING OF THE SELF – Joana Macy, 2. A Historical Overview – THE WEB OF LIFE – Fritjof Capra]

PERCEIVING DOMINATION / HIERARCHY / HEGEMONY

Capitalism, State, patriarchy, casteism/racism and so on are usually seen as the material manifestations or *structures* of Domination. (In this write-up we will use just the word Domination, to mean the complex of systems of Domination and Hierarchy). They can also be seen as flows of *traditions*. They can be seen as so many different negative connections, patterns and streams in the same *ocean of society*. These interconnected negative streams keep creating each other (in *interbeing*). These can be seen as aspects of one vast *negative eco-system of the eco-systems of Domination/Hierarchy/Hegemony*.

Theory of the earlier era (say 1850 - 1950) usually lights up the visible macro- structures - mostly the outer aspects of Domination – like trees and forest in an eco-system model. However Domination has inner aspects too. These negative streams (hegemony) flow inside *us*, our daily life, like soil and seeds. (Footnote – 4, given in the end of ‘Part – A’)

We continually engage in an unequal exchange of labour, of care and respect, even of *meaning*. Thus, when we impose an idea, even though emancipatory, on someone while taking advantage of our higher prestige, power intellect, it reduces and subordinates the *other*. (The *other* then becomes subsidiary and dependent on our idea.) These acts connect *negative* currents of egotism /hegemony inside us. So many aspects of Domination, our egotism and many negative aspects beyond, which intermingle and merge, create a hotchpotch, tangible or non-tangible patterns of negative currents. This hotchpotch then further enhances the currents of Domination and egotism. These currents are present with or (mostly) without our awareness, in our

feelings and hidden dreams, in our transactions and discourse. We can consider all these as streams of hegemony, egotism, their negative consequences and socialisations. Egotism/hegemony as desire to dominate – the negative aspects of our complex psyche also manifests itself in ideology, activism, organisation and the creation of polarities, *we* and the *other*. These also exist as domination and power of *intellect*, smartness and *consciousness* over so many other modes of feelings, understanding and relating.

These are eventually translated into our spontaneity, our faiths, our feelings, compassion and actions.

PERCEIVING COUNTER-DOMINATION / COUNTER-HEGEMONY – THE *ECO-SYSTEMS* OF CARING AND RESISTANCE, COMPASSION AND UNDERSTANDING

The currents of compassion, resistance and rebellion are of all kinds too. These can be visible, organised and vocal, like Marxist, Gandhian, dalitist, feminist; the global streams of movements against authoritarianism, war, for democracy (from below), social justice. Streams of counter-hegemony do play a crucial role in shaping these visible resistances, but its whole world is far larger.

In fact, if we only look at these formal, visible, reportable and organised streams, our perception becomes narrow and elitist. Then, we lose the *eye* to feel the sea of the so-called ordinary, informal, fleeting and amorphous acts, even invisible stirrings and feelings of compassion and understanding, caring and resistance. Someone helps a hurt being; one helps in opposing an exploitative act; one pains because of inability to help; one gives someone respect; one feels empathetic towards someone, may be for just a moment; one consciously struggles against one's inner egotism - for instance against desires to get name, fame or gains ... do these not constitute the overwhelming bulk of *compassion* and *resistance* in our social existence? Do these not constitute the *ocean* where *rivers* (as streams in ocean) of organised and visible resistance flow? Organised traditions of liberation do not consider these to be of much consequence. They often get blocked to feel most of this. We sketch this informal terrain further below.

Emancipatory traditions, *the second super power*, can be looked at, as on one side the visible and organised (rivers, lakes and streams), and on the other, the mostly invisible and diffuse (raindrops, moisture and subterranean pools and flows, like the major part of the water eco-system).

The feminist movement gave us questions and insights like: "Is the main body of the struggle against patriarchy just the handful of banner carrying, articulate and dedicated women? It is much more. The streams of positive currents and connections that strive against the dominant power of patriarchy are mostly flowing via the life and relationship of millions of humans, women and others also. The visible struggles are like the tips of waves mostly originating in these invisible but seething streams." Of course, the visible efforts, more conscious and organised, help to light up and connect the informal and invisible.

Similarly, consider the situation of the worker or dalit, black, colonised and peasant, or any other category of the oppressed. Their *organisation* that is visible and vocal is often not primary in building up their struggle and growth, their horizontal connections, self-respect, positive ego, knowledge and criticality. These are many a time, created and re-generated, nurtured and pushed ahead by the invisible traditions.

Look at the 60s and after, particularly in Euro/US. Large movements against war, imperialism-nationalism, colonialism, patriarchy, racism, and capitalism were emerging like a storm. Rebellions, also from the most marginal and invisible nooks and niches of the eco-system of oppressions were bursting upon our awareness. These were (to give a few examples), the prison people and the criminalized, the individuals, the lesbian/gay/bi-sexual/trans-sexual – the *LGBT* people, physically impaired or mentally different or the *meek* and broken – the ones who do not have the aggressive competence, management abilities and power drives to survive in the barbaric battle-field of ‘normal’ society. They all were throwing searchlights of different colours lighting up different dimensions of the innards of the Domination. They also were highlighting our insensitivity and ego-blocks – the Domination and hegemony within.

At the surface or visible level, all those rebellions had no link with each other. But how and why did most of them break out of their social prisons, around the same time?

These rebellions, the invisible streams associated with them, were and are crucial in reclaiming our compassion, empathy and anti-egotism – as counter-Dominational bridges and connections within the eco-system of resistance. They have always been crucial in opposing the *divide /co-opt /rule* strategy of Domination. As these rebellions broaden and deepen the positive eco-system, does not this help them to rise, to connect, to survive their *fall* and grow in maturity? Do they not connect positively (synergistically) with the traditions of the groundswell of movements for autonomy, sensitivity, empathy, and democracy from below?

As another example of the *invisible* positive streams, consider what is often called the *legitimation crisis* happening globally since 50s and 60s. “Official”, State associated mainstream authorities, political father figures and messiahs, laws and moral codes were losing respect and awe they had earlier in people’s mind. In our country, it often shows in an inverted way, as the people’s lament, “Society does not produce the likes of Christ, Buddha or Lenin, Mao, Gandhi, Peryiar, Ambedkar any more. Young people now-a-days are no more obedient and disciplined, like the earlier times”.

Of course, this *legitimation crisis* is usually associated with negative connections and consequences. In fact it is causing frightening chaos, insecurity and emptiness. People are desperately trying to find meaning and security in whatever is given, consumerism /career/ family or revivalism, alternate gurus, and fundamentalist religions. Domination /society declares such erosion of ‘official’ and classic paternalism /conformism as being due to the growth of indiscipline, disobedience, anarchy, individualism and so on. We on the other side can see such growth of negative individualism and also of surrenderism /fanaticism /guru worship differently. We can see it more as the negative consequences of the erosion of State, official ideology and its authority inside our mind, and not its primary cause.

We can also see the other side of the complex cycle. We can see the growth of mostly hidden streams of horizontal connections, search for alternatives in everything, and empowerment of the individual and clusters. *These positive streams and connections subvert the ‘moral’ and psychic roots of Domination in our mind, and this weakening enhances and creates those positive growths, counter-hegemony.* In our view, whittling down

of the official authorities, rise of negative individualism and new dependencies, and the growth /connection of positive streams of individuality, non-conservatism and interdependence from below are all related in an enmeshed way. In this way we can also perceive the strengths of the positive streams.

The *legitimation crisis* of conformism /consumerism and 'normal' work /career /leisure /pleasure /life-style/ culture is another site where we can see invisible social movements at work. These core *spiritual* pillars of capitalism are more and more failing in giving people meaning, warmth and security. This is leading to unprecedented turmoil. This is particularly so in the societies (Europe/US) those have offered the heights of consumerism and have exhausted their promise. (Footnote – 5, given in the end of 'Part – A') This is creating unprecedented crisis in mental health, drug addiction, violence, growth of revivalism and so on.

Emancipatory streams have not been so able as yet in offering clear-cut and visible alternatives. Nevertheless, this crisis in itself also takes one towards the quest for alternatives. Also, alongside this crisis, at the level of small scale, invisible and diffuse – positive currents /connections are creating a vast realm, a misty terrain of quest, search, experiments, moments and fragments of alternatives. This is manifested in the space of organising our self, relationships, work, love, spirituality, life-style, clusters, and communities. But these vibrant, unimaginably multi-coloured swirling mists, though present everywhere, are not easily noted. Lacking a common language, these are not clearly heard in the drummed-up cacophony of mainstream discourse, its omnipresent media. We can also see the situation of confusion as (at least partly) being caused by the *invisible positive streams*, the vibrant mist we mentioned above as eroding the traditions of 'normal' society, but weak as yet in creating visible and popular alternatives.

Let us consider more about the nature of these movements for peace, democracy, justice and autonomy from below, the vast mushrooming citizens' initiatives, mass organisations, political formations, and little NGOs that are not controlled by vertical processes. The intense flare-up of these global streams protesting against the US war on Iraq earned them the name of *second super power*.

At the global level, since 60s, these were not considered proper *movements*. They were seen (in mainstream Marxism) just as *popular aspirations* and unconnected spontaneous outbursts. It was believed that these movements would come up and then disappear, if not led by the 'correct' Marxist party. They did not even have any name, any leadership, organisation, connection, continuity, common symbol, programme, language, or pattern at the visible level. A dictatorship falls in Latin America, millions march against militarism in Europe, a 'criminal' becomes a Buddhist inside the US prison. What is the link? Is there a connection? From where does it keep coming up? Where does it disappear?

Our eyes are kept glued at the bosses and their institutions as making all the events. If we can look at the other side, we can easily see how our *second super power* is also changing the world. (Footnote – 6, given in the end of 'Part – A')

Today we can say that *development of capitalism* by itself does not create a more democratic world. Bush, Blair and Hitler, mafias and carnages are the more natural products of such malignant, profit /power driven

systems. Consider the US war budget and its absurd arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. The US Government is not a dictatorial clique, but a stable ruling process with a massive social support. For the last decade, it has had no military opposition or threat of war. Yet see how it manages the absurd feat of 'manufacturing' threat to US security and national consent regarding it. Then, it can make its people pay and die for its meaningless wars and expand its arsenal that already can destroy the whole world many many times!

In fact we can ask, despite such stupendous abilities of social control (by the Establishment), how does the world become more civic here and there? Why there are no storm troopers of Hitler or Bush ruling every nation, egging on many more wars? Why Bush and Blairs find life so hard? It is surely the mostly invisible traditions of democracy from below, always getting better connected – the *second super-power* – that is restraining the hands of the utterly insane first one.

USING MODELS / METAPHORS LIKE ECO-SYSTEM AND OCEAN

We are using words like *eco-system* or *ocean* to describe our political system. But by political system, we mean something broader than just *political-economy*. We mean by it what is called the social, political, philosophical, psychological, personal, spiritual dimensions of life (culture, values, compassion, ideals, respect, desires, meaning) looked at from the angle of Domination/Hegemony and its counter processes. We mean all those dimensions that have been lighted-up by social movements of different sections of the oppressed, like that of workers, peasants, toilers of the peripheries (so called in the *centre-periphery development model*), all those marginalized and made into refugees by this *development* and *nationalism*, women, dalits/oppressed ethnic categories. We mean the *ocean* of interconnected authoritarian processes at the personal, spiritual, social, political, economic levels and also the *ocean* constituted by resistance to these – by initiatives and global streams of movements against authoritarianism and war, for democracy (from below) and social justice. We also mean all those who are oppressed and disabled by the *dictatorship of the norm*, the *able-ist and merit hierarchy*. We mean the dimension of the *voiceless* (the immense variety of marginalized and rejects, children, and also animals, forests and so on). We also mean the *amorphous* and informal dimension of oppression, hierarchy, opportunism, insensitivity, conformism, individualism, sect-ism and so on. All these are lighted-up and opposed by the diffuse luminosity of the empathy, caring and resistance of persons, friendships and processes that are so often momentary but always connected. *Above all, we mean by this ocean all those other dimensions that we are too insensitive or incapable to see or imagine now.* We finally mean the dense interconnection of all these mentioned above. They ceaselessly influence and form each other. This is how Tiep Hien understand *interbeing*.

Since 1930s to 1960s, and after, descriptions or theories (that were more perceptive in *seeing* these processes, influences, flows, connections and traditions) kept emerging inside what we call the *first* and *second domain*. Thus anti-establishment and perceptive streams emerged in Marxian, Buddhist, psychoanalytic, Gandhian socialist, dalitist, existentialist, anarchist, feminist, post-structuralist... and of course in the *informal (in amorphous and mostly invisible ways)* terrain. We started *seeing* another side of society,

where these (processes of Domination/Hegemony and their counter processes) were more like moisture and mist, wind and water.

We see, in the model of society as oceanic eco-system, all *organised* and the vast *informal* sectors of resistance and caring, compassion and understanding, as positive streams enmeshed within the negative streams of Domination/Hierarchy/Hegemony. *Interbeing* outlook says, “Their life (of the *organised* and the *informal* sectors) as separate entities or organisations or isolated actions is only one aspect of reality. They are also like different aspects of *life* in a common body, those that not only influence but always create each other”.

CURRENTS AND STREAMS IN THE OCEAN AND THEIR INTERCONNECTIONS

One aspect of our *mind* is of course the *individual*, the structured *self* and the *personal body*, its internal relationships and organisations. However it has another aspect too. Here the *mind* – at the level of self, relationships, clusters and beyond, experiences and actions – can be conceived as patterns, *streams and seas* in the *ocean of society*. All sorts of traditions and currents (Tiep Hien call them **strings**) flow here — forming and connecting it to the whole society and Nature.

These currents are flowing to-and-fro from the *past* and the imagined future too. In the *present* we keep creating the *past* and the *past* keeps on creating the *present*.

NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE CONNECTIONS AND CURRENTS

In this conceptual ocean, Domination/Hierarchy/Hegemony can be understood to be constituted as the eco-system of negative connections/currents, and their counter processes as the positive ones. They may be visible and organised. They may be *informal* and invisible.

Densely connected, these connections /currents/ patterns are more than *interdependent*. They keep on forming each other (in *interbeing*). They may be negative – like Indian and Pakistani militarism giving life to each other. They may be positive - like one’s compassion for a fellow being, friendship between persons or movements – connecting and strengthening currents of love and egalitarian values all around. They might be, as it is mostly, grey, in infinity of shades.

MOVING BEYOND ANCHORS – NURSING THE *ECO-SYSTEM* OF RESISTANCE AND COMPASSION

Many Buddhist streams begin with the magnificent understanding of the need to go beyond anchors – even philosophic ones. They enter the *conceptual furnace* of *interbeing* and *nothingness* to struggle to melt down all anchors. **Ironically this often ends up in making categories of *interbeing* and *nothingness* as another *essence*!** This then invisibly becomes a new anchor, hiding so many other ones, and deflects us from realising the primary importance of categories like *exploitation* and *resistance*. The trouble begins when we give categories like *wisdom* and *knowing*, *detachment* and even *emancipation* a meaning and priority higher than taking sides in a world so deeply organised around oppression. Then the overblown tradition of *seeking wisdom* and *detachment* can block our vision and feelings. (Footnote – 7, given in the end of ‘Part – A’) Such

prioritising can end in getting stuck to meditating upon everything-in-interbeing as some primordial homogeneous soup, without any levels, structure, colour, tension, and orientation. This kind of regime under super-interbeing can isolate us from the values, conceptual tools and mindset of the specific traditions of resistance and understanding.

Tiep Hien (64 – 74) avoid such a pitfall of “making non-essentialism an essence”. They take a stand on how “one must not get stuck in contemplating reality, getting trapped in the endless spiral of how processes form each other”. In fact *Hien* begin with the striking warning, “*Amongst all different kinds of attachments, the attachment to ideas – even emancipatory – can become the most troublesome.*” Hence, they appeal to give highest priority, *not just to dwell in the world of ideas* but to also *act here and now*. *Hien* highlights that practice (directed inwards and outwards) creates wisdom and compassion as much as the other way round. Action must go on always, as it is the primary source enabling us to *nurture the positive connections* (Tiep) – with feelings, thoughts, perceptions, compassion and understanding. Though, on the other side, these connections enable our action too. Thus we must begin by seeing the reality and its separateness (specificities) as oppression and suffering on one side and compassion, understanding and resistance on the other. Then we can take a side and see the negative and positive aspects of *interbeing*. This is central to our tiep hien.

HOW MIND AND SOCIETY ARE CONSTITUTED IN TIEP HIEN’S VIEW?

FOCUSSING ON THE DEEP CONNECTIVITY OF EVERYTHING, BUT NOT UNDER THE REGIME OF SOME ALL POWERFUL PRINCIPLE:

Most religions believe in the deep connectivity of all beings and entities, insect, mind or stars... But here the connectivity is via God – the omnipotent and omniscient *One* (or many) whom we all are dependent upon. Only via *Him* do we get connected to the whole Universe and much beyond. Here the connection is through grandiosity and vertical authority.

The point of departure in Buddhism from most religions is – Buddhism too believes in the connectivity of all beings, the interbeing of the eco-system, but via processes that are predominantly horizontal and lateral. It means that this interbeing is not under any vertical power/principle, but is via processes that are horizontal and ordinary. [Here we are referring to those streams of Buddhism that do not deify Buddha; those that categorically reject connectivity via (or under) any God.] Each entity here is taken to a point of realization, where it’s being is nothing in itself. While traversing through this path of realisation the entities merge in the eco-system and then via this interbeing experience their creation and being. This point is of great interest to us, who are looking for alternatives in philosophy/spirituality in traditions of social activism. We might be all kinds of Marxists, socialists, agnostic Gandhians, anarchists, existentialists, many more – who are coming out of the faith in the ‘God’ of old mechanical science and reason. This is of interest also to those amongst us who are coming out of their faith in a strong individual-centric authenticity and living as the highest in emancipation.

Thus the *currents / connections / patterns* and *streams* that organise society or mind in the Tiep Hien tradition are not some all-pervasive cosmic energy flows or God or some kind of esoteric processes in the sub-atomic level.

In fact, radical dalit Buddhist currents have something interesting to say about the paradigm of brahmanism and those streams of Buddhism that got contaminated with it or became too closely associated with ruling power.

"Brahmanism (and others) always proposed some reality 'above' our experience, feeling and comprehension as primary. This would be some sort of super-energy and super-space that is then a suitable constituent and abode for super-entities like God, Atman (soul) and Truth. Such super-energy (cosmic 'vibrations') would be the master mind playing its unknowably mysterious games with the 'mundane' reality that we are." Therefore, the dalit Buddhist's rebel cry (along with many streams of Buddhism) was, "No God, No Atman, No (absolute) Truth". (Footnote – 8, given in the end of 'Part – A')

Thus, our *currents / connections / patterns* and *streams* are not some entities above our world. These are commodities, commodification, our experiences, work, creativities, feelings, relationships, transactions, discourse, actions, compassion, resistance, productions, influences, memories, their intermeshing and traditions at all levels of society — the economic, cultural and psychic, personal and interpersonal. These (*currents/connections*) include our relationship with all beings and also rest of Nature. These may be *conscious* or (as it is mostly) *unconscious*, invisible, irrational, strange and unknowable.

This view does not get into the debates like whether our mind is formed more by Nature (genes, instincts...) or *nurture* (social conditionings / discourse). It is many sided and open. The above *currents and streams* have been variously (and one-sidedly) called in various traditions of knowledge as being primarily the mode of *political-economy*; the ensemble of (Freudian) individual psyche; the ocean of language; discourse; culture; *collective-unconscious*; transactions; behaviour; Nature; *nurture*....

People acquainted with Marxian traditions can note that this (way of describing) has some similarity with the Hegelian tradition.

Tiep Hien also see reality as fluid and ever changing. They see different aspects of reality or *currents* as ceaselessly creating each other. However, in contrast to the Hegelian view, Tiep Hien strive to reject teleological presuppositions and preconceived notions. They do not have such pre-constructs like *Idea-Being*, *spiralling upwards*, towards some grand finale – by *negation of negation* and so on. Their view is also broader than the Hegelian view; here *currents* may appear in bundles of *TWO* (aspects of *dialectical* contradictions), but this is not a necessity. Here any number of currents flows, connecting and forming each other.

Like Marxism, the Tiep Hien orientation is critical and sceptical.

They have no Idea or God or any cosmic entity, which is outside and *higher* than life, (ordinary) reality, society and Nature. Thus, they reject what they call *vertical spirituality*. The world of Tiep Hien is no other than that of mind/society, biosphere, and Nature.

However the Tiep Hien perspective is broader than Marxism (Footnote – 9, given in the end of ‘Part – A’) in at least four senses:

Firstly, though supposed to be dialectical, the concept of *matter* in Marx’s materialism was influenced by the mechanistic view of positivist science reigning at that time. Then, 150 years ago Dominational religion, God and his *invisible* regime were the main legitimisers of most systems of exploitation. Marxism was deeply inspired by the success of the rebellion of streams associated with natural science/rationalism against these *invisible* ruling entities. Thus it held, “Things that can be seen or measured are primary – all the rest are secondary or non-existent and mythical”. So, Marxism saw the instruments of economic production and its ownership, the labour that produces commodities, its political economy, its production, distribution and appropriation as primary. In Tiep Hien, all relationships, mostly invisible psychological categories, influences, social currents, traditions, also Nature and their processes are as primary social resources as labour time, commodity and classes or machines - the *material reality* of Marx. Thus, in our type of societies, economic domination, exploitation and hierarchy can be clearly seen as causing the bulk of our suffering. Our tiep hien can have no doubt about it and this understanding becomes its crucial rallying orientation. Alongside this, Tiep Hien consider our *spiritual and intellectual/cultural realities and resources* (along with the Marxian *labour*) as primary too. These create (*invisible and non-measurable* but basic) categories like, *compassion, definitions, meaning, and respect, empowerment*. **In their view, the vertical organisation/ engineering (control from above) of all these invisible and non-measurable resources and also all living beings and Nature, their appropriation, distortion and distribution is Domination too.** Each unequal exchange of our *spiritual and intellectual resource* (like love, respect, *meaning*) in our daily life, inside our family or even in our organisation for *social change* can in all possibility become a particle of the *soil and seed* of Domination and Hierarchy. This is enmeshed with *exploitation of labour* that was visible since long. However on the other side, each egalitarian exchange of love, worth and labour (mutual aid), even within negative streams has potentialities to strengthen Liberation. (Footnote – 10, given in the end of ‘Part – A’)

Secondly, related to above, Tiep Hien hold that the *inner* and *outer* aspects of the world, the *subjective* (ideas and feelings, self, identity, relationships, experiences and actions) and the *objective* sides cannot be always put as *primary* and *secondary*, like *base* (economic) and *superstructure* (non-economic). Nevertheless, Tiep Hien oppose those traditions of religion that place the *inner* as primary in relation to the *outer*, material aspect.

In fact, Tiep Hien ask, “Isn’t it straightforward and clear that *both* the inner and outer are primary, none more primary than the other in most situations?” Yet, why this realisation always gets fractured? How we can link with the streams that heal this split?”

Thirdly, Tiep Hien are deeply aware of the diverse dimensions of life, the biospherical and ecological, and their dense connectedness.

Lastly, Tiep Hien seek to appreciate the positive aspects of emancipatory streams based on God and religion or any other icon, authority, 'ism or ideology or identity. For Tiep Hien the connections of streams of emancipatory *compassion and understanding* (reason) along with *witnessing, caring and acting* are the heart of all counter-Hegemony/resistance. These may be conscious or un-conscious. Such *compassion and understanding* along with *witnessing and acting* can be associated with any symbol or identity. It can be God based or, on the other side, agnostic or atheistic. It may be the gentle breeze of some beautiful feeling, sensibility that flow everywhere, whose origin is never known. One may call it the stream of Buddha or Gandhi, Christ or Marx, anarchist or Tiep Hien, class struggle, friendship, caring, or mutual aid. Nevertheless, however different it might be, it is always enmeshed with the streams of Domination and egotism/hegemony. What matters is, how with criticality we use these to connect positively, enrich life and the streams of liberation at this moment.

NOTES ABOUT OUR UNDERSTANDING

In the history of natural sciences, as people pondered over the nature of inanimate matter, there were always two kinds of views. The *atomic* view considered matter to be made up of tiny, discrete, unchangeable, solid-like particles, of different types. The other, *field* view saw matter as made up of different types of currents of flowing fluids or fields, like streams, patterns, waves and vortices in river or sea. Since 1920s, each of this view was seen to represent different aspects constituting the nature of matter. For a slightly different but detailed account of this journey, see *Web of Life*, Fritjof Capra, p. Resources Appendix - III.

Then we come to the history of views or paradigms behind our understanding of the animate and sentient world that includes our mind and society.

At one point of time, Literature and particularly the so-called science of psychology (emerging from the West) saw mind as mostly personal, an individual entity, and compared it to discrete particles with fixed characters. Such an understanding was quite mechanical. It was, *seeing the trees and not the biosphere*. There were many streams that saw the *interbeing* of personal mind, society and social formations. Particularly in socialist theory, Marx pointed out the interbeing of personal mind, social structures like class, large social processes like the mode of production. This tradition along with anarchist and other streams of socialist thought showed how economy, politics, culture and different aspect of society and our psyche are densely connected and inter-creating.

First part of 20th century (20s to 40s) saw the beginning of *paradigm shift* in the concept of human mind, even in established social sciences and psychology. Freudian and post Freudian, Frankfurt school and Gramsci traditions of critical Marxism, linguistic, structuralist, existentialist (40s – 50s) and lastly, post-

structuralist (since 60s), all heralded serious breaks. It broke from the rationalist and individual centric mind of the bourgeois scientific era. It also began correcting the one-dimensional, rationalist *mode of production* centric mind of old Marxism.

Concepts like *collective unconscious* were already there. *Field theory* ways of descriptions, that saw even matter and its particles and structures as waves and vortices in flowing currents in strange oceans, were becoming popular in physics since 20s and 30s. Alongside, we had the emergence of *System theory* approach and cybernetics (40s and 50s) that saw living beings, machines and even societal categories as open systems of flowing processes that were interconnecting and inter-creating each other.

Later, with the rise of the ecological understanding, eco-system approach became popular, particularly in the emancipatory streams in 60s. Many anarchist commentators like Bookchin, Situanist International (Paris) and many others were using such ecological understanding to describe the society and emancipation. (Footnote – 11, given in the end of 'Part – A') This was accompanied with the parallel emergence of many other streams. There were the post-structuralist streams critically examining the oceanic traditions of discourse in organising society. Alongside, there were the currents that emphasised *deconstruction*. Cultural analyses, along with economic and political analysis were already grown in critical Marxian tradition. All these created a rich, deep, subtle, process-centric (along with and complementing the *thing* or structure centric) and interconnected description of mind and society. Thus in 50s and 60s, western radical practice and philosophy could create powerful connection with Buddhist, Taoist, and other older traditions that already had a similar, non-mechanical materialist and non-God dependent way of understanding the world, society and our self. (see Appendix – III; Joana Macy)

However, early enough, literature had opened up, even in the nineteenth century. Within it, many currents had begun to envisage the mind as flowing and fluid, multi-coloured and multi-centric, as enmeshed streams, too often strange, irrational and unknowable. The intangible became tangible, got highlighted through literature. It came to conceptualise the *personal* to be continually formed by experience and imaginations created at the level of relationships, clusters and society. Hence, ideas like that of the *collective unconscious*, traditions and streams that keep forming a large part of our personal mind, have been there in literature for a long time. The mind has been likened to an ocean where the past lives and changes in the present and flows further. Such an understanding considers personal mind as formed and also flowing as streams of an ever-changing river. Here the personal mind is one level of the cluster (society) that is made up of unimaginably many levels, each creating the rest. Within this conceptualisation, even as the mind (at the different levels of individual, relationship, and cluster) is seen as a part of a larger ocean, it is yet considered to be unique.

Due to its special role, literature and the vast oral traditions could easily make connections with and influence the streams within the social mind. They not only had a space to celebrate the subtleties and goodness of ordinary life but also could empathetically reflect upon its ironies and negative sides – the understanding of the gross. Thus through literature (and the much vaster oral tradition) there was an immense amount of informal activism and connection flowing into the rivers of behaviour, transactions and discourse.

Summing up, everything can be seen as 'eco-systems of eco-systems', open and in interbeing, with depths and connection that are largely invisible and often beyond our imagination. Here, each nook and niche of each eco-system, its building blocks and structures, and also the rivers and currents / patterns flowing and connecting through it are eco-systems in interbeing.

This view was widespread in old Buddhist and other Eastern traditions, whatever be the language it had been expressed in. Such views were often expressed in mystical and religious language. These were often appropriated, changed and propagated by Dominational religion. This has become popular in Western discourse since the 60s, from anarchist to ecology movements, anti-establishment spiritual streams to post structuralism and so on.

Here individuals and structures are distinct entities, nodes, hubs and also open eco-systems, in interbeing with everything else. Streams of culture and values, like compassion, resistance (to Domination/Hierarchy), altruism and anti-egotism are also open and flowing eco-systems.

We will give some illustrations below, of such metaphors and models. We will give examples by looking at an *individual* (Gandhi, p.) and the streams of value like compassion (p.) and anti-egotism (p.).

LOOKING AT ENTITIES; FOR INSTANCE AN INDIVIDUAL; AS AN OPEN ECO-SYSTEM; IN INTERBEING WITH EVERYTHING – GANDHI

Gandhi has been usually depicted in the language of the *individual* though vast and complex. He has also been pictured as a *multiple* personality, many persons in one. In our *language*, he gets described also as an open eco-system, in interbeing with the vast ocean of social eco-system. He and the whole society keeps influencing and constructing each other. This interbeing extends to whole of the past before him, and the future after his assassination too. Innumerable bunches of currents, connections and patterns, originating in radical anarchist traditions like Tolstoy; from inside the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa; in the anti-colonial movements in India, from the tradition of the deep need of Indian people for a benevolent, omnipotent authority, a messiah; from the need of the upper class and upper caste nationalists, Birla and Nehru families for a engine to rise to the top of the post colonial society; from the upper-caste hindu traditions and also from the shramanical critique and strivings to reclaim those dominant traditions from below; from within his family; and of course from the multiple levels of his psycho-history and so on – constitute the terrain of the interbeing that we call Gandhi.

This is similar in our description of not only Gandhi, but also of any individual. Here we are giving his example as he is so well known and his life easily *lights up* the appropriateness of this interbeing model. We will continue discussing this model in the (Notes in End, p.) on Gandhi.

EVEN AS A MODEL / METAPHOR, OUR OCEAN AND STREAMS OR DESERT AND SPRING ECO-SYSTEM ARE INADEQUATE

The *material* and *simple* aspects of our society can be represented to an extent by such models. However, too many aspects of our highly sentient and collective *social mind* are far too strange and out of reach of any model. (Footnote – 12, given in the end of 'Part – A') So models are more to help, to clarify and stir up our imagination.

It has been well said, “Truth (reality) is not only stranger than fiction, but it is much beyond whatever we can imagine”.

Thus we do not believe that there can be a single *universal* theory, paradigms, model, conceptual tools, method, realisation, faith, meditation – religion or science – that can understand everything, from atoms to our society. Dominational religion, science, 'isms and most philosophies keep searching for, and then coming up with such TOE (Theory of Everything). We rather follow those traditions that believe that methods need to be appropriate for different levels of reality, and also for the different specific purpose we have in our mind. Even for the same broad level of human mind/society, different terrains like psyche and economy need approach that must be general, that interconnects and overlaps, but is also distinct and appropriate, for our point of view and goal.

Also, our goal is not to understand so much, but to cope and act. We are to do this with the realisation that most of the reality, shimmering in processes that are more invisible, irrational and stranger than our capacity to imagine, will forever remain beyond our comprehension.

ANOTHER CRUCIAL THEME IN OUR WRITE-UP IS, THE PROBLEM OF ARROGANCE OF THE ORGANIZED SECTOR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

So far, the declared (*conscious*) streams of emancipation and activism, the *organized sector*, have been saddled with traditions and paradigms that have made these “carry the burden” of leading the people to emancipation. This makes them arrogant and blind towards the *informal* terrain, the rivers and sea, moisture and mists, of 'ordinary' compassion, resistance and its eco-system. History, even radical theory written for the oppressed, was blind to this until the 50s. However, the informal terrain always found a friend in literature as well as in its 'poor' but ever-present *informal* sister – the oral traditions.

Another Model – the 'Desert and Spring Eco-system'.

(Example inspired by the popular science fiction DUNE.)

The relationship of positive and negative interbeing in our tiep hien can be seen as the 'life nourishing Spring' struggling within a 'Desert'. In reality, spring is an aspect of the desert. For our convenience, we are splitting the single desert eco-system into two symbolic ones – the life nourishing side (Spring) and the side that drains life (this we are calling the Desert). In our symbolic world, Spring and Desert intermingle, but also have their independent existence. All this has not

much to do with real deserts, that are life nourishing too, and also give rise to the spring!

Domination /Hierarchy/ Hegemony can be seen as the innumerable diverse streams /connections/ patterns of the eco-system of a toxic *desert*. Some are *structured*, visible, regional and global (like capitalism, Statism, patriarchy, centralist developmentalism, casteism/racism and so on). Domination can also be seen as currents flowing, amorphous and diffuse micro-aspects of infinite variety. They form the subject of the *first* and the *second domain* mentioned in the Introduction.

THEN WE HAVE THE VIEW FROM THE THIRD DOMAIN.

This comprises the initiatives, currents /connections/ patterns and streams of emancipatory compassion, understanding and resistance, the life, festivals and struggles of the *Spring*. These can be grouped into two sectors, the *organised* and the *informal*.

The aspects of the Spring called the *organised* sector are like visible rivulets and oasis. These are the *declared* and *ideology/authority-centric* traditions like the Marxist or Gandhian, socialist or anarchist; they are also the organised resistances of specific victims like the people as peasants, workers, women, lower caste /dravidian /dalit, adivasi, colonised ...

But the major bulk of these are mostly invisible (in interpersonal, micro aspects) that we are calling the *informal* terrain. They are all types of emancipatory initiatives in spaces within and amongst persons and relationships and may even be in discrete moments, links and understandings. They can be fleeting feelings and acts of compassion, friendship, resistance and respect. They are even the feelings of guilt when let down and manipulated by ones own self. We see them as currents and patterns flowing and connecting in the spaces of relationships with others, other beings and also our own selves. These are as different as the infinitely varied situations of life. These are like the moisture, raindrops and subterranean flow of water in the ***Desert***. These streams are always enmeshed in the negative currents – the toxins of the Desert.

Innumerable such positive streams strive and flow everywhere, whether inside prisons or factories, schools or families, communities and neighbourhoods. These also flow within the *organised* sector (of emancipation), no matter how much it is distorted by power.

Each type of action in these streams creates and is created by a *specific* type of *compassion, resistance & understanding*. On the other side, *each* type of Domination has a *corresponding* type of seed & soil (egotism/ hegemony and other negative currents), which extends everywhere, even inside the spaces of the *Spring*.

COMPETE AND ACCUMULATE, DIVIDE, CO-OPT AND RULE ARE THE CORE PATTERNS /CURRENTS OF THE DESERT, THAT PERMEATE EVEN WITHIN THE STREAMS OF EMANCIPATION

Malignancy of Domination is the proliferation of such negative patterns /currents flowing in each relationship, person and group, from the top of society to its bottom. It is the connection of these negative patterns, their mutually enhancing positive feedback that creates the ***Desert***, a chain of negative *interbeing* of

immense power, connectivity and variety. In particular, the *Desert* tries to *fragment* and co-opt the *Spring*, ensnaring it with the negative currents (egotism, servility, norms and so on) from within.

On one side, each section of the *organised* sector of resistance believes, "*We are the best, we are the centre*". This belief is often positive and important, to celebrate our commitment, to get strength from our collective will power. This is particularly so in situations of gross material and spiritual deprivation. In fact, this belief is mostly associated with the need to prioritise one specific, massive and common aspect of oppression over all else, in order to unite, to pool our comparatively weaker strength, and struggle against it. In such situations, it can also be a subjective and partial truth that can be of crucial value to victims.

However, negative currents / patterns, like virus, can make this a window, a point of entry to corrupt the positive core in it. These negative currents then make different sections of the organised sector compete and fight (for the scarce resources) more, and cooperate less. Moreover, the problem also increases when this organised sector, in order to concentrate upon fighting the negative system (which in cultural, gross and subtle form are more obvious in the informal terrain), ignores and denounces any positive within the informal terrain. Its consequences are possibly the deepest foundation of all kinds of ego block within the radical traditions. These traditions then, further with an *egotistic* outlook, refuse to see the *informal* terrain as one of their root, their equal. They see any positive current in this terrain solely as unconscious and passive, just as a raw material to be 'improved', or 'diversions' that should be ignored or suppressed.

On the other side, the elements in the *informal terrain*, also contaminated by negative currents, usually fail to see the larger reality. They believe, "I/my family have/has to struggle alone; what do I have to do with *them* (other positive actions and organised efforts)?" The positive currents here (in the *informal* terrain) are usually not even aware of the immensity of the ***Spring***, and their being part of it.

HOW TIEP HIEN COUNTERS THE DESERT WITHIN THE SPRING?

"Sowing the seeds ... and taking good care of the tree of enlightenment (the Spring-eco-system of 'compassion and understanding, witnessing, caring, resisting and rebelling'). "

From an ecological viewpoint, *balance and harmony in Nature, in society and in behaviour are achieved not by mechanical standardisation but by it's opposite, organic differentiation*. Similarly here, the core principle of the life of our *Spring* is *unity (interconnection) in diversity* – of the different *organised* and the *informal* terrain. Mutual enrichment, opening-up to the diversity and deepening holism - each empowers the other and is the lifeblood of the *Spring*.

Here we will sketch how our tiep hien may examine this core principle of nurturing the positive eco-systems

We can begin by examining how Domination, its vertical connections and its toxins create various types of gaps, blocks, fractures and conflicts amongst crucial eco-systems of flows of nutrients, water and air across

the spring. We will give a few examples, discussing the problem in three groups, focussing on some core ethical/value streams and concepts in emancipation.

First we will discuss *compassion*, its relation with *caring, reason, and resistance*. Secondly, we will discuss *egotism*, its relation with dependency and authoritarianism along with the counter-currents of anti-egotism, autonomy/anti-authoritarianism. Lastly, we will mention how Tiep Hien conceptualise *correct path* in this outlook.

I. THE PROBLEM OF FRACTURE WITHIN AND AMONGST STREAMS OF COMPASSION, CARING, REASON, RESISTANCE AND REBELLION:

In the third domain we try to understand how and when, compassion that is involved in helping a sick/impaired person (or any other being, 'even' an insect) can enhance the type of compassion that is created with the political movement against exploitation, and on the other side, when it does not do so. We also explore here as to how counter-Domination seeks to connect these currents laterally and horizontally, enriching each other and the eco-system of resistance.

In our tiep hien we are not saying that compassion or sensitivity is always great and is something that should now be added to the *revolution* – the more we do it the better it is. We do not agree with this kind of outlook. In fact, was not sensitivity/compassion the initiator for each stream of revolution? On the other side, do not most Dominational religions that make the loudest claim about their compassion work to enhance and stabilise the soil of oppressive systems?

In this part we are looking for conceptual tools that can analyse *compassion* as many sided, complex, strugglefull, fluid and ever changing tradition; one that has a positive aspect as of being an ethical and social movement directed inwards and outwards; also as one that can be negatively connected and used by Domination / hierarchy, its institutions and market. We can perceive compassion as an eco-system with various positive and negative currents flowing through it. With this perception we want to examine questions like, how Domination exploits *compassion*. In what way can this *compassion* be reclaimed to nurture resistance and rebellion?

Conventionally, compassion is understood as a mindset and feeling of some non-sufferer towards the sufferer. Resistance, on the other hand, is meant to be the expression (practice) of compassion and understanding of the sufferer that engages with suffering (and its cause) that is one's own, and also of others in the same situation. This is clearly seen when some type of exploitation or oppression creates suffering. Marxism calls it *class outlook/struggle of the exploited*.

This kind of understanding creates a grave *fault line* between the streams of compassion in general and the specific currents of compassion-in-resistance. Domination uses this *crack* to organise split and conflict (create negative connection/ patterns/ streams) between those sister streams. Then, Domination can organise compassion (of the *non-sufferer*) into a hierarchical charity giving mindset and relationship with the *sufferer*,

reducing one to a dole taker. This can easily get co-opted in the various *welfare establishments* of the State, Dominational religion and other vertical processes that range from UN to the World Bank, right down to institutionalised parties, Lion's clubs, relief societies of the rich, big institutionalised NGOs and Trade Unions. Such compassion can be manipulated to legitimise the Hierarchy, as instruments of power game, as commodity, spectacles and market. This can block the creation of self-realisation of the sufferer as a community of the oppressed, an awareness and solidarity in resistance.

On the other side such *specific currents of compassion-in-resistance*, when split from the compassion in general, also can get co-opted more subtly. An alliance-in-resistance of the sufferers of one social category (as workers, dalit, women, oppressed nationalities or even *disabled*) can cause failure of their compassion in growing more sensitive towards other dimensions of suffering, where they are the non-sufferers or even exploiters, and others are *sufferers*. This also blocks them from perceiving the inequalities that are always thriving within any group of sufferers.

In accordance with our eco-system perspective, there is no single, omniscient, universal compassion, love – the Buddha and its eye. Hence, there cannot be any single path of true faith and meditation or scientific theory/understanding, or tradition of caring or rebellion that helps us to be sensitive to each and every type of suffering.

Compassion is diverse and complex, like a vast eco-system. We do have a universal capacity for compassion, but it is more like a basket of seeds of all types that are blocked from sprouting, suffocated in innumerable ways by 'normal' civilisation. This capacity can grow in various directions, but only by opening up and connecting to the immense variety of specific currents of compassion flowing in the social eco-system, from each of its innumerable nooks and niches. Various types of *universalist compassion* is there. But these are also *specific* currents in this eco-system. We further describe our understanding below.

Firstly, each of the categories – *sensitivity /empathy /compassion, understanding/reason, and experiencing/witnessing/practicing/caring or resistance*, not only influence, but also keep creating each other. Compassion and understanding, all the time, keep creating each other. One is incomplete and sightless without the other. Each gives drive, meaning and direction to the other. In fact a core problem of the third domain is how these streams are split and get pitted against each other by egotism/ hegemony and manipulations of Domination. Then, compassion becomes sightless and irrational, and understanding loses its commitment and its heart. However, it is not just the fusion of compassion and understanding that creates practice, in a one-way flow. There is a reverse flow too. Practicing/caring/experiencing/witnessing (action), that is directed both inward and outward, create vital elements of compassion and understanding. All these categories and streams are, as Tiep Hien say, in interbeing.

The commentator of emancipatory theory – Gottlieb, has passionately pointed out an instance of how understanding (theory), even when its goal is morality (compassion), becomes selectively blind – when cut off

from experiencing /caring /practicing of some specific type. He says that, Marxism and most *secular moral theories* that are concerned about issues of understanding and compassion:

"...has little place for persons in need of constant physical help and cognitive support, nor for those who care for them.... I invite the reader to reflect on why it has taken so long for moral, political and spiritual thinkers – who have written so much about so many things – to think deeply about disability issues."

The very first reason that Gottlieb gives for this is:

"...those who do the thinking and writing about moral life are not the people who take care of children or the dependent..." (The Tasks of Embodied Love: Moral Problems in Caring for Children with Disabilities, Gottlieb, 'HYPATIA', Feminism and Disability, Part II, vol.17)

Secondly, this three-way *interbeing* (of the streams of compassion, understanding and practice) is also not some mantra that can light up everything. Currents of compassion, understanding and practice are of immense variety, colours and textures. These are connected and also secreted in each niche and nook of the vast ocean of the social eco-system. Compassion and reason secreted in one nook or one terrain, however poignant and authentic, grand and vast, may not be able to sense compassion and understanding that lie in another nook, secreted within another type of experience and practice.

Thus for instance, consider the specific compassion (and its understanding that is for instance rooted in marxism) associated with and secreted in the struggle of the economically exploited against the system. Is it sufficient to sense the specific compassion that is created as we engage in the practice of taking responsibility and care for a disabled close one? Is it the same as that associated with women in patriarchy or dalits in brahmanism?

We could also add to the observation of Gottlieb and ask, why many a time such a beautiful eye of compassion that is created by carers and experience of the disabled gets blocked to see the sufferings and struggles of the economically exploited. Why such compassion can even be sightless towards the tribulations of the immense variety of other types of sufferers?

In fact, one central task of our third domain is to examine how Domination and hegemony can organise splits amongst all these compassions of different colours, and thus manipulate and connect them vertically to the systems of Domination.

Here, we examine another classic problem: can we, in specific, real situations (of taking sides) understand the victim and the victimiser with the same and single, universal eye of compassion?

Engaging one-sidedly or disproportionately in the practice of compassionately understanding the persons trapped in the victimiser category may sidetrack us from feeling for the people in the victim traps. Such compassion can land us into a maze.

Here, to empathise with the people as victims, the need becomes to connect and also practice with the streams of compassion that are created by the life and resistance of the people trapped in victim category. On the other side, a sole mission to go deeply in this type of compassion (for people as victims) can cause serious problems. This can block us to see the problem holistically – the degradation and *fall*, the invisible victimisation by Domination and its processes of the person trapped into the victimiser role; the seeds and currents of victimiser within the victims.

Can we solve this problem theoretically or by some path of meditation or by compassion alone?

It is easier to see these as different currents of compassion, coming up from various sides, jostling, always trying to create one-sidedness, needing checks and balances, connecting in complex ways. We feel a compound or ecological model of compassion might be more appropriate here.

II. EXAMINING DIFFERENT STREAMS THAT STRIVE AGAINST *EGOTISM*, THE PROBLEM OF THEIR FRACTURE

Many veterans, witnessing the *fall* of innumerable varieties of socialism say, “Egotism of our leaders was the main problem”. There is a lot of truth in it. But, as we discussed regarding compassion, **we are not saying that *anti-egotism* (struggle against egotism) is always positive; it is the ‘cure-all’ medicine for all types of pollution of power afflicting social movements, and the more we can practice this (*anti-egotism*) the better everything will be.**

Here we can see various classes of such conflicts and fractures amongst the streams against *egotism*. (These will be discussed more in Part – B, next.)

Most Dominational religions propagate that the struggle against personal level of egotism is the cure-all, key to emancipation. They uphold that egotism (of the self) is the root of all negative systems. At the same time, they emphasise anti-egotism as *surrender* (dependency) to *true authority*. These *true authorities* are believed to be beings that have risen above egotism. Thus, those streams of religion cannot conceive that these *true authorities* can have a kind of egotism, that our dependency/attachment to them can be a problem.

Emancipatory streams against the establishment on the other side, emphasise struggle against authoritarianism/*egotism* of the system of oppression – be it blessed by God, religion or some moral code. They emphasise how the system of oppression, and surrender to its *true authority* is the root of egotism. Yet they are blind to and even uphold authoritarianism/dependency within their *truly emancipatory* order. Thus these emancipatory streams do not address problems of egotism within the oppressed and their *true authority* and organisation.

Both these traditions either ignore or want to organise/co-opt the vast currents of ordinary and informal strivings against egotism/dependency that are without any flag. These strivings flow through each of relationships, our transactions and us. When we do any altruistic/anti-egotistic act, these currents / patterns connect and flow, though at the next moment we can do differently, connecting negative currents.

One basis of the conflict (within different type of streams against egotism) is their inability to see the interbeing of different categories of egotism, authoritarianism, dependency and Domination/Hierarchy. Then, the life and connection of these categories at various levels, micro and macro, personal, relational, cluster/community/societal is not realised.

Thus, we might struggle against authoritarianism/egotism of the outer system of Domination and its soil of dependency. Nevertheless, we can believe authoritarianism, egotism and dependency – within our order – as fine, as necessary. We do not see how these are often the *seeds and soil* of future Domination.

Struggles of the oppressed of diverse kinds (workers, dalit, women, adivasi/peasants at the periphery and so on), understand and emphasise the particular system of Domination that they oppose most as the *main* root of all egotism. Thus workers struggle would see economic power, dalits would see brahmanism, and women's movement would see patriarchy as the main root. This is another source of conflict and fracture.

How to strive against such fractures? How to examine the anatomy and psycho-history/sociology of such fractures, and also the process of their healing?

We will not see egotism, authoritarianism, dependency and their counter-currents as just some ethical *value* or some one-dimensional *character* of an individual – like one's nose. Each transaction of inequality create/connect a negative current/ pattern, the ensemble of which constitutes the ocean of egotism/authoritarianism/dependency. Similarly, each striving for equality creates and connects their counter-currents/ patterns. In addition, each type of inequality creates elements of one type of egotism. Thus these processes (of egotism/anti-egotism, dependency and autonomy) are of infinite variety.

We look at them (egotism/hegemony/chauvinism or dependency and their opposites) as eco-systems, negative and positive. We can thus consider these currents to be emerging from, combining in complex ways and shaping the innumerable nooks and niches the eco-system of society. Thus, they are like connected patterns of currents that emerge from and influence life at the level of individuals, relationships, clusters, class, gender, caste and other societal categories/hierarchies and our collective unconscious associated with different systems of Domination.

Hence, there is no *universal* category of a single type or master pattern of egotism that can be countered by a single antidote / counter-process of anti-egotism. *There is no 'highway', path of meditation, faith, inner voice, or scientific analysis and struggle that can build up our anti-egotistic sensibility against each and every type of egotism.* All these will work, but limited only to a specific space. For instance, sensitivity and struggle against patriarchy can build up our sensitivity against patriarchal egotism. However, that too will be of a specific subtype only, associated with a particular type of experience. It cannot by itself, sensitise us against the egotism of classism. It may not even sensitise us to the other innumerable varieties of patriarchy that are far away from our limited experience. Moreover, the very dedication with which any emancipatory stream is

striving against one type of *egotism* can create an ego-block towards other sister streams. This is an irony, a crucial and pervasive problem.

Now, the question that needs to be examined is, how various patterns/currents of egotism /dependency /authoritarianism within the space of persons, relationships, clusters and other societal levels of Domination (like capitalism, casteism, patriarchy) create and influence each other. How struggles for *inner change* (against various types of egotism at the personal and community levels) enrich or get fractured from the struggles for *outer change* (against egotism / hierarchy /authoritarianism at the societal levels of Domination)? We will discuss these questions in Part-B.

III. CONCEPTUALISING CORRECT PATH

Tiep Hien does not offer a 'new' or a 'best' Path

Tiep Hien do not offer us a path to peace, paradise or Moksha. They do not claim to offer a correct path and then appeal everyone to unite under it. They do not offer any clear *solution* to the problem of *Revolution*. Neither do they show us the path of Marx leading to a classless society, or sutras for a Buddhist society nor the Gram Swaraj (village people's self rule) of Gandhi.

Our tiep hien rather say, "In the Spring there are positive currents, elements of correct path flowing within each of the *organised* and *informal terrain*. We, as well as these currents are always enmeshed in egotism/hegemony and authoritarianism. These usually take the form of believing that "our path is the best or most important". (Footnote – 13, given in the end of 'Part – A') Can we not make friends (get connected) with these positive aspects in different rebel currents? In order to realize this, let us all strive towards an *outer* and *inner* cultural (spiritual) rebellion that will celebrate, respect and connect positive currents in different initiatives".

Our tiep hien see the concept of path, the Buddhist *middle* path, in this light. A path conceived by some ideology, theory, wisdom or meditation and realisation – however *balanced* and *correct* – can always lead to one-sidedness and sectarianism. It will always reduce our capacity to learn from so many other positive paths all around. All such emancipatory orientations and paths are of course essential and useful. But it is not enough. We need another type of path to compliment any particular path. Here, this other *middle path* can be seen as the eco-system of positive aspects of all emancipatory paths – organised or informal, visible or invisible, imagined or (as it is mostly) beyond our imagination. We cannot conceive or create it in a defined and clear-cut way, like some path (as it is usually understood). It is thus a positive stream that influences us. The more we can reduce our ego blocks, open our empathy, and are rooted in the soil of interconnection with emancipatory aspects of diverse paths, the more *middle* will our path be.

Their Core is not a Philosophy, Wisdom or Realisation

But Living, Witnessing and Journeying — Engaging with Suffering; nurturing the Spring

Such a journey has to be undertaken by striving against suffering. A crucial aspect of this is struggling against the class of suffering that is caused by exploitation of our labour and material resources. For the grossly deprived people of the world, this is the root of bulk of their suffering. Such a journey also is a movement to reclaim our cultural / psychological / spiritual resources. These are in *interbeing* with our economic mode of production. These are essential for everyone, even the economically poorest. These resources are what they call the fusion of *compassion and understanding, along with witnessing/caring/acting, directed both inward and outward*. In our journey we need to open up and nurture with both the organised and the informal sector. We elaborate below:

Our *tiép hien* see the *negative interbeing of suffering* - the *Desert*- at three levels:

FIRSTLY, as a myriad of varieties (of suffering) all around us, *here & now*;

SECONDLY, as its *roots outside*, in the systems of Domination/Hierarchy;

THIRDLY, it is as the *seeds and soil*, the roots of Domination (inside us), as future *suffering* - in our inner life *and* activism today.

Hence, we can conceptualise the struggle against *suffering* (the *Spring*, the *source* of compassion, understanding and witnessing/caring/acting) at three levels.

FIRSTLY, at the level of the *myriad of varieties (of suffering) all around us, here & now*:

This is what they have to say to the *scientific and other organised revolutionary* streams – those that are dedicated to struggle against the *outer*, material and social, *roots* of suffering,

“Look at the vast **informal** terrain, where *common compassion, mutuality and resistance* is grappling with suffering, its myriad of varieties, *here and now*. Are all these not the diversity, constituents and sources of the *Spring*? Our material labour (creating the so-called material *commodity*) is not the only thing that is exploited and estranged from us. We also *labour* to create non-material entities (that are connected to the material aspect but also have their uniqueness and reality) — our *spirits*, culture, ethics and values, compassion, respect, for each other, for our selves, for all beings; our feelings and experiences, and intellectual categories (*definition and meaning*). These are also exploited, re-constructed according to the needs of Domination, commodified, made into *spectacles*, ideology and Dominant discourse, and then poured back on us. Look how social norms, the State institutions, Dominational religions and commerce manipulate and exploit our *initiatives, creativities, friendship, autonomy, resistance and common compassion*. Such appropriation of our empathy, common compassion and feelings for each other and our self reduce the power flowing via our horizontal linkages that is the heart of the *Spring*. Then we become depleted in emancipatory spirituality /energy, unable to create horizontal solidarity. We become like particles of sand, at the mercy of the *Desert* winds of Domination. Struggling against exploitation of these *spirits* and intellect, to reclaim our compassion and understanding along with witnessing/practicing is also crucial for liberation. *Common humanity* grappling with suffering is the central stream of these struggles.”

This realisation provides a basis for non-hierarchical relationships to exist between the *conscious or organised* sector with the *informal terrain*. This is calling for a veritable revolution in the classical tradition of *revolution*. This classic tradition bases itself on a particular type of *compassion, understanding and practice* that believes in a unique and single type of *root* exploitation - whether economic, political or casteist/racist or patriarchal.... Such *reason* and practice (of one colour) –based on a single type of *compassion /suffering /exploitation* and directed solely outward tend to get torn from its feeling and eye of *ordinary* and multicoloured *compassion*. It then becomes one-sided, egotistic and sectarian. It is difficult for such reason and practice to see the *exploitation* of different colours, even that of our *compassion, culture, and also the world of struggles* against it.

SECONDLY, the outer *roots* (in the system of Domination) – practice directed outwards.

They call for liberation of the immense traditions of *compassion and spirituality, witnessing and practicing*, from the prison-house of State, organised/paternalist religion and ‘normal’ society. They ask these traditions,

*"How can you oppose suffering if you do not use reason (of the material world) to understand (analyse) the **material/social roots of suffering?**" "How can you liberate compassion, particularly amongst the oppressed/sufferers, the workers, women, dalits ... if you cannot struggle to push back the walls of social/material system of oppression that is stifling it, the children under paternalism to everyone under the system of Domination?"*

THIRDLY, striving to connect *compassion and revolution against exploitation* is not enough. We must understand egotism/dependency and the currents /patterns of hegemony - the *seed and soil* of Domination *within*. These are the embryo of Domination in us, the *future suffering*, which fragments and pollutes our *Spring*. These hide within the **organised** sector, distorting the streams of “*commitment to our revolutionary Authority, Path, Party*” or worshipping “*Our Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha*”. In the **informal** Sector, it is present everywhere within the society, hiding as individualism, dependency (on authority), ‘normalcy’, conformism and so on. Thus, the three intertwined currents of *compassion, understanding, and practice* must also flow inwards, striving for inner change, and connect with the currents of counter-hegemony.

A nurse to the Spring in the Desert

Our view of *negative interbeing* offers us an extreme criticality, a scepticism that can lead to cynicism and despair. Our tiep hien counter it by showing the world of *positive interbeing*, the tradition of *Sihaya* – the initiatives and streams that nurse the *Spring* in the *Desert*.

We can hear them saying,

"Of course, there is no pure Buddha, no Highway to liberation. They all have flaws. But, let us not get frustrated. Let us not get drowned in these insecurities of losing anchors and simple hopes. Let us not get lost in the emptiness. The more surfacing

we can begin to let go of clutching on to all such 'vertical' truths and faiths, such type of thing-in-itself – the more we can see beyond, we can see the Spring everywhere.”

These realisations help to open-up our feelings, our eyes. As we learn to see the all pervasive negative currents and connections, we can also learn to see the positives everywhere. We can see the interconnections – negative as well as positive *interbeing* of all processes, whether outside or inside us. Then we can open our minds better to receive the flow of *compassion & understanding along with witnessing and practicing*. These come via all acts of compassion, mutual aid and resistance - small or large - organised or informal, visible or invisible, imaginable or unimaginable. These emerge from and connect via each of the immense variety of nooks and niches of our social eco-system. We can then ally with the innumerable streams of **compassion and understanding, caring and resistance** of the **informal terrain, thereby joining in greening the Spring**. We can contribute our little resource to enrich the synergy of compassion and empathy, caring and resistance with criticality and understanding. All these will help to struggle against corruption, hierarchy, egotism and co-option by Domination within.

Thus we can do our **Tiep** - meaning to connect positive currents, tie the ends of two positive **strings** together, within and outside ourselves, in order to make them longer; at the same time do our **Hien** – meaning to practice, care, resist, rebel– drawing nourishment from and continuing the fusion of *compassion and understanding, witnessing, practicing, caring and resisting*. Then we can accept the omnipresent Desert and yet rebel – celebrating and nurturing our *infinitely* multi-coloured Lotuses here. Naturally our post 60s sisters can find Tiep Hien speaking to them.

It is a sweeping concept. It is a true spirit of the 60s - (to) “**be realistic, demand the impossible**” (*wall writing, Paris, 65*).

Notes

Our classification of the world of social movements into the *organised* and the *informal* sectors and their hierarchical relationships is just one way of describing. A large *intermediate* terrain, for instance that of small group/issue based, local activism and their network, that cannot be put into such slots has always been there and keeps growing. The type of problem that Tiep Hien are discussing is better accepted in this amorphous terrain. But, in the Desert of today, the *Spring* at this level is mostly invisible so far in our country. We will talk about it again in the END (p.).

Tiep Hien have no intention of giving a philosophy 'better' than the existing ones like Marxism, socialist, bahun, anti-brahmanical/ neo - buddhist dalitist/anti-racist, Gandhian, post-colonialist, feminist, social/radical/deep ecology, even anarchist ... (This problem of working and intervening on the level of philosophy but not giving the 'correct philosophy' is discussed in PART – D, D-1 &2, p.) These traditions are good in analysing one or the other aspect of *outer* systems of Domination – what is being referred to as the *surfacing*

first and to some extent, the *second domain*. They are good in seeing only one dimension of the problem that we are focussing here (of sectarianism or co-option into establishment, the pollution of power inside) – particularly the problems with *other* traditions. For instance Marxism/ socialism is good in analysing the problem of classism and economism (reformism), feminism that of masculinisation.... Each of these streams is good in showing specific distortions it is experienced in. However they are not appropriate to look at the spaces *inside their own* and within different traditions of radical organising *comparatively, specifically* or *holistically*, the commonality and connection between these problems of pollution of power.

Tiep Hien seem to be especially appropriate to launch examination of problems from the *third domain*. These are the problems of hegemony, egotism and power inside spaces of different *organised sectors*. *These are also the problems of relationship and communication of these organised sector with each other and the informal terrain*, in a specific, panoramic and holistic way. Furthermore, the approach of Tiep Hien is to see the streams of compassion and resistance as live and complex entities like eco-systems, as a fluid mosaic in intimate connectivity. This helps us to build a sort of psychology, sociology and history of these streams and their interactions as a part of a holistic canvas. This helps us to see their specific strengths, lacks, possibilities and problems of cooperation, and lastly, the growth of malignant propensities like egotism/dependency, ego-blocks and other negative streams within. We can unravel how egotism creates fractures amongst these emancipatory initiatives and streams. We can examine how, instead of mutual enrichment of different types of sensitivities and compassion, this leads to expansionism, infighting and distortions in different sister streams and the eco-systemic life of emancipation. With such understandings, we can highlight the problems of co-option and of reducing vertical links. We can study the situation of lateral linkages, their strength, block, weakness, and work to improve them.

IT OR THEY

All these *currents*, patterns, connections and streams, *interbeing*, *eco-systems* and tiep hien for us are something more than just some entity or organisation. We are trying to see these processes as alive, as complex beings like individuals or community in society, biosphere. We also see these patterns as the *interbeing* of the individuals and their clusters. Hence, in this writing we have referred to these streams (Tiep Hien) as *They* and not *It*.

The Dimension of Engaged Buddhism

Radical and *engaged* traditions from Buddhism are playing an important role in the resistance shaking the autocratic and capitalist regimes from South Korea, Thailand to Burma, to the dalit Buddhist struggles in India (that we referred in the *Introduction*). Can we see currents of Tiep Hien as living in the radical and introspective fringe of such streams?

We know nearly nothing about these trends and streams inside and outside India. How to get in touch and learn from them?

Notes in end (p.)

LOOKING AT ENTITIES, FOR INSTANCE AN INDIVIDUAL, AS OPEN ECO-SYSTEM IN INTERBEING WITH ALL ELSE – GANDHI

He was the main hub and voice of a whole array of emancipatory streams in India. It was largely through his struggles that the people of our country got connected with the vision and tradition of a radical opposition to the centralist, Statist, greed and waste based economy, politics and culture based on Western-centric capitalism. His experiments in upholding non-violence, democracy, empowerment and autonomy of the toilers at the bottom, compassion and *priority to the hindmost*, combining inner with the outer change, putting together emancipatory spirituality – striving to reclaim the mainstream hindu tradition for social liberation – has profoundly influenced libertarian traditions in India.

In fact, his attempts to be authentic and anti-power oriented, shine so brightly that by and large, these attempts remain unparalleled in the history of emancipatory Asian leaders. At the time of India's independence, he gave up all organizational power, when Congress Party got the supreme power.

Does all this make the “perfect Mahatma”? We are trying to understand Gandhi as a great, ordinary, complex, paradoxical being. A being that was the creation of his times. This is not to deny, Gandhi as an individual, but to understand how we as persons and individuals are created.

On one extreme, one Gandhi was playing power games as king maker in Congress Party high-command, the apex of power-to-be in India. There he did not mind bending the rules of the game to pursue what he considered to be the correct direction. This might have been blocking Ambedkar's proposal about dalit autonomy or pushing Nehru up in the power hierarchy, cornering Subhas Bose, so many other sordid things that are necessary accompaniment of high power. In fact, such acts soiled his image in many quarters.

The usual language to conceptualise Gandhi as all these above is, “Gandhi had many personalities”. But, we can also describe the phenomenon of Gandhi as, *all kinds of currents and streams, emerging via sources outside and inside him, were jostling in him, and he was an eco-system, in interbeing with all other kinds of eco-systems of the world*. Then we can pose questions like, were these streams wholly the creation of his own life – his individuality? We can then examine all these streams in larger social context.

Indian people, with their paternalistic, religious culture, wanted a messiah. This was for positive reasons, as a crutch for the weak and the meek to rise against the Great Imperial authority and power, and build up their self-respect, autonomy. It was also for negative reasons. This afforded our capitalists and caste elites, the families like Birla and Nehru all over India, a devise to empower themselves. It enabled them to rise above the

worshipping masses, suppressing their criticality in this dimension (of realizing the games of the rising local bosses). It helped create the Frankenstein of the Congress power class, and gave legitimacy to the new rich ruling classes. Thus, all these positive and negative sources created powerful streams that connected with the purpose, drive and merit of Gandhi the individual. All these went into creating the powerful updraft, which created *Gandhi-baba/Father of the nation*.

On the other side, can we give all the credits for the anarchist anti-centralist streams flowing through Gandhi to the individual Gandhi? Global streams like Tolstoy, anti-apartheid streams in South Africa, shramanical/spiritual libertarian streams in our social history, must have played a key role in organizing the experience and psyche of Gandhi. Of course, it was Gandhi the individual who connected with and then reorganized those streams. But, the above must have played a crucial role that enabled him to take the radical anti-power step, *his last struggle* that climaxed in the eve of our independence. It must have helped him to take such a stand against the Frankenstein that he had played a significant role in creating.

Lastly, we can see how the traditions originating via an *individual* can become independent of that person, capable of even standing against the person. What happened when Gandhi the person stood against the centralist tradition, Congress Party power, legitimately fathered by him during the independence of India? The Congress high command and the whole upper echelon, in their mad scramble for power, were hardly moved. They managed to suppress and overcome this last stand and wishes of Gandhi – that of delinking Congress Party from power, breaking the Party-government-power nexus – without much ado. On the other side, the little tradition of Gandhi – renouncing of power, the radical and positive streams flowing and connecting via him, somewhere lives on beyond the person of Gandhi too, inspiring beautiful streams (visibly and invisibly in us) since then.

(In fact, we do not have the scope here to discuss Gandhi as a vast and rich eco-system. Even the well-recorded levels, nooks and niches of this eco-system are bewildering, a representation of the agony, irony, dilemmas, compassion, resistance and insights of colonial India and the world of early twentieth century. Emancipation will always be a student of the Gandhi tradition, which we will keep referring to in our notes.)

FOOTNOTES FOR 'PART – A' (GIVEN IN THE END)

1. Since the communist party government came to power in 1974, the leading Buddhist organizations, those fought in the independence struggle, have been banned. Their monks have been jailed and persecuted in various ways. In fact, for the past three decades there has been a movement in Vietnam and abroad too, for freedom and democracy.
2. Dominational religions have both positive and negative current associated with them. When these organisations are coupled with Dominating forces more, the positive currents will be less. Churches associated with the dominated can often become centres of resistance and compassion. As the social positions of the dominated and dominating will shift, the mix of associated positive and negative currents will also alter. With this understanding, we will use the term *Dominational religion* in our write-up more to mean the *dominant* ones in the social region we are concerned about.
3. This is common and striking if one looks comparatively at the radical currents in the Taoist and Zen streams (making a counter-point to official Buddhism and Confucian traditions) in South Asia, Bhakti streams in India (rebellious against brahmanical traditions here), Sufi stream in India and Middle East.
4. Limitation of our metaphors:
These *trees* and *forest* as Domination, and *soil* and *seeds* as our psyche/relationships/culture have limitations even as a metaphor. Like the *hen* and the *egg*, it is too simplistic and mechanical. In the interbeing model, the *seeds* and *soil*, *hegemony* and *egotism* within the people is inconceivably more complex than the Freudian psyche or the Marxian *social/class conditioning*. We see *hegemony* and *egotism* more broadly than desire to dominate /control or Domination (the negative system) inside us. As it emerged since the 30s to 60s, different radical traditions lighted up different aspects of this reality. Freudian streams light up the multi-layered, live and mysterious sub-conscious and psyche, giving depth to the Marxian *conditioning* by political-economy. Structuralism, existentialism, post-structuralism – all these light up different processes and systems of the *psyche*, from the different levels of the individual to social. Similarly, all social movements, anarchism, feminism, anti-racism to anti-colonialism to ecology light up different dimensions of such psyche and society. We will touch upon it more in section *B*.
5. The manipulative cunning of Capital is exceedingly powerful but is also vulnerable. As it rises big, it along with it brings its fall – somewhere, in some invisible way. Its very process that alienates and commodifies every entity around also leaves some hidden loopholes from where can sprout its counter processes. For instance, media commodifies the struggles of the people against Domination and then these images reach the 'ordinary' people and further enhance resistance. Here, resistance may be enmeshed in co-option but yet spreads.

6. We can look at the stupendous changes in Europe, from 40s to 90s. What was the mainstream history of Europe for so many centuries, till 40s? Any power hungry clique could organize a frenzy of nationalism or whatever and make the people of Germany and France and other nations kill each other, in tens of thousands to millions. Just in 20th century, 300 lakh (300,00,000 – thirty million) people killed each other in Europe.

Since then, things have changed in ways no one could have imagined. Exploiting classes and hierarchies do keep dominating. But can they by their mad greed whip up the hysteria and holocaust that was so chronic till 40s? Though they exploit and play their power games, the rules and rhetoric have changed significantly. Now the name of the game is 'European Union'. Can we not say that the mostly invisible traditions of emancipatory change, learning from the world wars, could connect better in post-war Europe? Can we not say that the millions who kept marching and marching against greed and war, for no material or chauvinistic 'reason' of their own, since 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s and then – were the visible tips of these traditions? We can surely say that these traditions of change from below played a crucial role in changing the rules of the game of Domination.

7. The trouble also begins when we begin to believe that there is some 'true' path by which we can achieve the state of *detachment from all anchors*. Such faith only makes us arrogant and blind. We then look at other people's anchor and not our own. Any of us, even Buddha for that matter, had and will always have many anchors! To strive to realise *nothingness* and *interbeing* indicates, above all, a direction for a journey and not the definitive conquering of anchors.

8. Our country has been thick with Super-beings/Super-energy-fields, avatars and ghosts. In Ayodhya the Babri Masjid was demolished, by fanatical mobs led by our present central ministers, because Lord Rama was born in that very spot! This in '90 (?) flagged off the worst chain of carnage and rioting within hindus and muslims all over India. Our central minister in charge of science and education declares that stars and planets control our destinies, and so astrology has been made into an officially sanctioned part of our University syllabus.

Old scienticism was quite effective against such superstition in the service of sectarian fanaticism. With its single coloured but powerful search light of "whatever that cannot be seen or measured does not exist", it could easily expose such superstitions. But it was crude and limited. Thus old science was not enough to understand why the myths of religion are so deeply embedded in people's mind and why they will not go away with 'scientific education'. It could not even understand why science based 'isms (from our scientific nationalism / socialism to Stalinism or Maoism) usually become so fanatical and sectarian, like worse of the Domination religion!

In order to go deep into all these problems and learn, we have to add to and step beyond the protective shelter of old science-based discourse. We have to accept the realm of the invisible, the unimaginable, the spaces within our psyche and world that

are outside the reach of *rationality*. In this shadowy world, propositions cannot be 'proved' or 'disproved' so easily. And therefore, striving against superstitions of all vested interests become much more difficult. We have to choose to go beyond easy answers and clear stands. We have to learn to live with our vulnerability, inadequacy, doubts and insecurity. But yet, we can mention many guiding points about our invisible currents and other entities that will help to avoid superstitions and blind worship.

9. By 'Marxism', in our write-up, we mean the official, 'scientific' Marxism that came to us from Soviet Union, China and all our main communist parties, as we noted in Introduction. We do not mean by this 'Marxism' the Marxism of Rosa Luxemburg, Frankfurt school, Gramsci and others, the critical and egalitarian streams about whom E.P. Thompson could say, "Marx belongs to our tradition."

10. In a world of hierarchical structures, it is just not possible for us to always relate as "equals". We are embedded in unequal exchange, hegemony and complex relationships. Here it would be simplistic to interpret all exchange between *unequals* as just currents of Domination. Hence, it is important to be conscious of the seeds of Domination and the currents of egotism/hegemony in such relationships – the enmeshment of grandiosity, dependence, resentment, gratitude, guilt, complacency, frustration and a lot more. The power that is usually misused and the creation of subordination, but also on the other side we need to understand the struggle that one undergoes to make these unequal relationships to some extent equal and egalitarian, in order to consciously or unconsciously connect and enhance positive currents. It is important for us to become conscious of this complexity. This further implies that even as we work towards a more equal society, in the present (hierarchical) context, we yet remain engaged in these complex relationships. By cutting ourselves from these realisations and relationships, we would unwittingly connect currents of Domination.

11. Look at one core declaration, *Society of the Spectacles*, from Situationist International initiative in Paris in 1967. In this insightful overview, the society, oppression and emancipation is viewed from the core dimension of economic-political-social-psychological Domination. Society is seen as a negative eco-system of *spectacles* associated with the *commodity* of classic Marxism.

"But certainly the present age prefers the image to the thing ...For in these days illusion only is sacred, truth profane." – Feurbach, THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, p. 1

1. The entire life of societies in which modern production conditions prevails *heralds itself* as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.

2. The images that detach themselves from every aspect of life in a common stream where the unity of life can no longer be re-established. Reality considered *partially* unfolds itself in its own general unity as a pseudo-world *apart, an object of mere contemplation*. The specialisation of images of the world finds itself accompanied in the

world of the automatised image, where the liar has lied to himself. The spectacle in general, as the concrete inversion of life, is the autonomous movement of the non-living.

...

4. The spectacle is not an aggregate of images but a social relation among people, mediated by images.

5. The spectacle, grasped in its totality, is both the result and the project of the existing mode of production. It is not a supplement to the real world, its added decoration. It is the heart of the unrealism of the real society. In all its specific forms, as information or propaganda, advertisement or direct entertainment consumption, the spectacle is the present *model* of socially dominant life. It is the omnipresent affirmation of the choice *already made* in production and its corollary consumption. The spectacle's form and content are identically the total justification of the existing system's conditions and goals. The spectacle is also the *permanent presence* of this justification, to the extent that it occupies the principal part of the time lived outside modern production.

...

34. The spectacle is *capital* to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes image.

SECTION – II

“For it is only as the universal category of total social being that the commodity can be understood in its authentic essence. It is only in this context that reification which arises from the commodity relation acquires a decisive meaning, as much for the objective evolution of society as for the attitude of men towards it, for the submission of their consciousness to the forms in which this reification is expressed ... This submission also grows because of the fact that the more the rationalisation and mechanisation of the work process increases, the more the activity of the worker loses its character of activity and becomes a *contemplative* attitude.” – LUKACS, HISTORY AND CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS

35. The essential movement of the spectacle consists in absorbing all that existed in human activity *in a fluid state*, in order to possess it in a congealed state, as things that have become the exclusive value their *formulation in the negative* of lived value. Through this we recognise our old enemy, *the commodity*, who knows so well how to seem at first glance trivial and self-evident while on the contrary it is so complex and full of metaphysical subtleties.

36. This is the principle of commodity fetishism, the domination of society by “imperceptible although palpable things”, which reaches its absolute fulfilment in the spectacle, where the world of the senses is invaded and permeated by a selection of images which at the same time have forced their acknowledgment as the tangible par excellent.

37. The world at once present and absent which the spectacle *lets us see* is the world of the commodity dominating everything that is lived. And so the world of the commodity is shown *for what it is*, because its movement is identical to the growing *estrangement and distance* of men among themselves and in relation to their global product... ...

(To appreciate their writing better we quote from a review, appended in their booklet, in The Sunday Times, 1968)

“The notion of “spectacle” (drama, happening, mask) is crucial to the theories of what is probably the furthest out of the radical factions ... (it) redefines the Marxist concepts of alienation and fetishism in terms of dramaturgy. In our consumer-technologies, life is merely a bad play ... we strut about in a bankrupt sideshow playing parts we loathe to audiences whose values are meaningless or contemptible. Culture itself has become frippery and grease paint. Our very revolutions are melodrama, performed under state rules of make-believe; they alter nothing but the cast ...”

12. Thus in any material or comparatively simple biological eco-system, communication proceeds at a slow pace and simply — that is from one point to another. Though our bodies and material products, words, written or oral, are subject to such limitations, these (limitations on communication) do not hold for a large part of our mind and society. In imagination we can travel *instantaneously*. We can even travel in the past and imagined future – our nostalgias and dreams, love, hate and complex emotions. Non-material entities, like currents of warmth or anxiety, feelings of persons and of clusters, complex concepts, visions and values can *travel*, interact with social processes in ways so strange that we can never imagine.

13. Too often in rebel streams, such one-sidedness, selectively prioritising and deep commitment to ones’ mission is inevitable and even necessary to break out of hegemony and conformism of Domination. It can also become the source of beautiful self-confidence and strength. Nevertheless, we do have to strive against the egotism that easily gets associated with, ‘our path is the best’ mindset. (Such a mindset can blind us towards the concerns of different categories of others.) However, on the other side, such reflections can blind us to see the positive sides of the struggles organised with the above mindset. Then, we can ironically get caught into the catch 22 situation, “Our mindset (of seeing the negativity of others who hold on to ‘our path is the best’ outlook) is the truth”.

THE ORDER OF *Interbeing* – By THICH NHAT HANH

Thich Nhat Hanh was born in central Vietnam in 1926, and left home as a teenager to become a Zen monk. When war came to his country, Nhat Hanh and many of his fellow monks left their monastic isolation and became actively engaged helping victims of the war and in publicly communicating their desire for peace. He founded the School of Youth for Social Service, Van Hanh Buddhist University, and the Tiep Hien Order. In 1967, Martin Luther King nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize. He is the author of *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire*, *Zen Keys*, *The Cry of Vietnam*, *Being Peace*, and many other books.

THE TIEP HIEN ORDER was founded in Vietnam in the beginning of 1964. The words Tiep and Hien have several meanings.

TIEP means “to be in touch with” and, “to continue.”

HIEN means “to realise” and, “to make it here and now”.

In order to better understand the spirit of the Tiep Hien Order, let us examine the four expressions; “to be in touch with,” “to continue”, “to realise,” and “to make it here and now.”

TIEP: What are we “to be in touch with?”

The answer is reality, the reality of the mind as well as the reality of the world.

To be in touch with mind means not only to be aware of the processes of our inner life, i.e. feelings, perceptions, mental formations, etc., but also to rediscover our true mind, which is the source of Compassion and Understanding. Being in touch with true mind is like digging deep in the soil until we reach a hidden source and the well fills with fresh water. Upon rediscovering our true mind, we are filled with Compassion and Understanding, which not only nourishes us, but those around us as well.

To be in touch with true mind is also to be in touch with buddhas and bodhisattvas, who are enlightened beings doing their best to show us the way of understanding, peace, and happiness.

Refer to OUR REFLECTION - B-1 –

***TIEP: Opening up, getting connected, and enhancing the positive flows* p.**

To be in touch with the reality of the world means to be in touch with everything that surrounds us, which includes the animal, vegetable, and mineral realms. In order to really be in touch, we must strive to get out of our shell, the conceited shell of “I am”. We must try to see both the wonderful things in life like snowflakes, moonlight, bird songs and flower blossoms, and the dreadful things like hunger, disease, torture, oppression and other forms of suffering. With *Compassion and*

Understanding, we can enter into life with the firm desire to alleviate the suffering around us.

In the past, we may have made the primary mistake of distinguishing between the inner world of our mind and the world outside. These are not two separate worlds; they belong to the same reality. Notions of inside and outside are helpful in everyday life, but they can become an obstacle preventing us from seeing ultimate reality. If we are able to see deeply into our mind, we can simultaneously see deeply into the world. If we truly understand the world, we also will understand our mind. Buddhists call this “the unity of mind and world.” –

Refer to OUR REFLECTION – B-2 –

Inner vs. Outer Change – War Amongst Religions And Scientific Socialism ***p.***

In modern Christianity, one finds the ideas of vertical theology and horizontal theology. Spiritual life is the vertical dimension of getting in touch with God, while social life is the horizontal dimension of getting in touch with humans. In Buddhism, there have been persons who also think in these terms. They speak about the above level of practising the Buddha’s Way and the below level of helping living beings. However, this understanding does not accord with the true spirit of Buddhism, which teaches that Buddhahood or the nature of enlightenment is innate to every being and not a transcendental identity. Thus, in Buddhism the vertical and horizontal are one. If one penetrates the horizontal, one finds the vertical, and vice-versa. This is the meaning of “to be in touch with.”

OUR REFLECTION – B-3 –

***Tiep Is – Striving Against Any 'Vertical' Spirituality
That Stands Above The 'Horizontal' Currents and Connections*** ***P.***

Next we come to the concept of “to continue” or continuation.

Tiep means to tie the ends of two strings together in order to make a longer line. “To continue” connotes extending and perpetuating the career of enlightenment, which was started and nourished by buddhas and bodhisattvas that preceded us. It is helpful to remember that the word buddha denotes he or she who is awake or enlightened. The word bodhisattva also signify an enlightened person. The way of enlightenment that was started by the buddhas and bodhisattvas should be continued, and this is the responsibility of all who undertake Buddhist practice. Sowing the seeds of enlightenment and taking good care of the tree of enlightenment are the meaning of “to continue.”

OUR REFLECTION B-4

Doing Tiep – Creating Positive Connections ***p.***

HIEN

The third concept is “to realise” or realisation.

Hien means not to dwell and be caught in the world of doctrines and ideas, but to transform insights into real life. *Compassion and Understanding* must not become ideas about *Compassion and Understanding*. They must be real, existing entities within life itself, which can be seen, touched and experimented with. The presence of *Compassion and Understanding* can concretely alleviate suffering and will cause the birth of joy and the appearance of a smile. Of course, to realise does not only mean to act. First of all, realisation connotes transforming oneself. This transformation creates a harmony between oneself and Nature, between one’s own joy and the joy of others. Once a person gets in touch with the source of *Compassion and Understanding*, this transformation is accomplished. When this transformation is present, all one’s actions will carry the same nature and effect - protecting and building life with *Compassion and Understanding*. If one wishes to share joy and happiness with others, one should have joy and happiness within oneself. If one wishes to transmit serenity, first one should realise it oneself. Without a sane and peaceful mind, one’s actions could only create more trouble and destruction in the world.

OUR REFLECTION B-5

HIEN — Making A Change In Real Life, Here And Now

p.

The last expression for us to examine is “to make it here and now.”

Within the spirit of Tiep Hien, only the present is real and everlasting. The peace we desire is not in the distant future, but something to be realised in the present.

To practice Buddhism does not mean to endure hard things now for the sake of peace and liberation in the future. The purpose of the practice is to have peace, for others, and ourselves right now while we’re breathing. Means and ends cannot be different. “Bodhisattvas are careful about causes, while ordinary people care more about effects” because bodhisattvas see that cause and effect are one, and means are ends-in-themselves. An enlightened person never says, “this is only a means,” and he or she worries about those who declare, “whatever means will help me attain my goals are good.” Based on the insight that means are ends, all forms of practice should be entered into mindfully and peacefully. While practising sitting meditation, walking meditation, cleaning, working, or serving, the one which practices should feel peace within himself or herself. The aim of sitting meditation is to be peaceful during sitting meditation. Working to help hungry or sick people means to be peaceful during the work. The one who practices does not expect that practice will pay large rewards in the future, even if that reward is nirvana, the pure land, enlightenment, or Buddhahood. The secret of Buddhism is to be awake here and now.

Revisiting the Ends and Means Debate

Thus far, we have examined the meanings of the words, tiep and hien. Western friends, especially those, who are Tiep Hien members, have been looking for equivalent English or French words to express Tiep Hien's meaning. The term *Interbeing* was proposed by the author of the book, *The Sun My Heart* as a rendering of a Chinese term, which is found in the Avatamsaka Sutra. This is a recently invented word, but we hope it will be more widely adopted in the near future.

Members of the Tiep Hien Order observe fourteen precepts. The Sanskrit word *sila* connotes a mode mind and volition, which manifests also in speech and bodily action. The Tiep Hien precepts are not a set of prohibitions. They are guidance for life not only in general terms, but also for each moment's practice. The word "precepts" should be understood in the context of the Three Practices: *sila*, *samadhi*, and *prajna*, or precepts, concentration and insight. The precepts lead to concentration while concentration leads to insight. Thus the precepts are fundamentally disciplines of the mind or mindfulness. However, we should try to understand the *Interbeing* of the Three Practices. Although the precepts lead to concentration and insight, the precepts themselves are concentration and insight. The same is concurrently true for concentration and insight. Perhaps the most appropriate definition of *sila* (precepts) is being awake, mindful during each bodily, verbal and mental activity. It is only within this broad definition that the precept can embrace and engender concentration and wisdom. Following the traditional commandments not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, not to drink alcohol, etc., is not sufficient to produce concentration and insight. In the Tiep Hien context, the word precept fully embraces in itself the meaning of awakening. If one truly observes the precepts of the Order of *Interbeing* in daily life, one can definitely cultivate concentration and insight simultaneously

BEGINNING AND END

On Wesak Day, 1964, six persons received the Tiep Hien ordination in Vietnam. They were the first Tiep Hien members. Their ages ranged from twenty-two to thirty-two years, and all of them served on the board of directors of the School of Youth for Social Service. The year 1964 was a turning point in the war.

The Tiep Hien Order was one manifestation of a willingness to bring Buddhism into the realm of social action during a period when society required a type of engagement to oppose war, hatred, violence, and divisiveness. The Order underwent ten years of experimentation, during which the number of its members,

both in the core community and the extended community, was consciously limited. This period of experimentation ended in 1974. **END**

TIEP: Opening up, getting connected, and enhancing the positive flows

What is this “source of compassion & understanding”, the “fresh water” flowing underground? What is to be “in touch with” the “true mind”? What are these beings, “buddhas and bodhisattvas” – without a *capital*? Are they some unique individuals and their inspiring memories?

The Tiep Hien spirit is: *let us give up seeking the Sun – some Buddha, Marx or Science. We can learn a lot from them if we do not let them blind us to the diffuse night-light all around. Let us accept the perpetual night. Then we can open our eyes to find a little light everywhere!* Thus, *buddhas and bodhisattvas* can be conceived as currents, patterns and streams of compassion and understanding, practicing and caring, resistance and rebellion, introspection, anti-egotism and counter-hegemony. They are flowing in the *ocean* of social mind. They can also be conceived as the nourishment that flows throughout the *Spring* in the *Desert*. They exist at innumerable levels, from personal, interpersonal, social, to that of the biosphere and Nature. They might be visible. But mostly they are invisible like the subterranean *hidden source of fresh water* that keeps *filling the well* of our mind.

Thus, our *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* are mostly the positive currents /connections /patterns of love, anti-oppression and anti-egotism. They may be self-aware, organised, associated with an act, just a fleeting feeling, or a dream. **For instance, a bodhisattva stream can be, deep togetherness with the other, where the other is not another - but there is an inherent connection based on the inevitability of suffering and persistence of resistance.** These *bodhisattvas*, these streams can be associated with any name, any icon, Gandhi, Christ or Buddha, Phule, Kabir or Marx, reason or empathy, our feelings, compassion or love, you or me.

We note that these streams can never be pure; they will always be enmeshed with alienating currents. These positive streams in a hierarchical structure in no way can ever be in full togetherness; there will mostly be many points of departure – conflict, clash, subjugation, resistance and so on.

Hence, getting connected, and opening up to get connected to the positive streams, trying to find a connecting point of empathy (with awareness of the hierarchical forces) even though for a moment, is Tiep – a core of Tiep Hien.

Some Consequences of the Interbeing Outlook

IN THE INTERBEING OUTLOOK, NO ACT, INDIVIDUAL, ORGANISATION, PATH OR EVEN A VALUE IS PERMANENTLY AND ABSOLUTELY GOOD OR BAD'. EVERYTHING IS CONTINUALLY SHIFTING SHADES OF GREY.

Of course, conceptual categories and aspects of reality like Domination or Hierarchy or any act that empowers them is negative. But, in any real life act or in an individual, negative currents are an aspect, however major. There is always a positive side to it – the positive emancipatory currents are always touching and flowing through life, making the act grey.

"Can we see how each tiny act of compassion and resistance strengthens the soil of emancipation,

and also carries the seeds of Domination?" – (From p.1)

A large aspect of our selves, organisation, our feelings and acts or values are like flowing bunches/patterns of positive currents enmeshed with the negative, a hotchpotch in flux, like flowing and open eco-systems nested and deeply connected with innumerable others. Here, how can any *act, individual, organisation, authority, paternalism or path*, or even a *value* always be all good or bad? (Footnote – 1, given in the end of Part – B)

Interbeing outlook helps us to build up our scepticism - to strive to feel and dig up the negative currents everywhere - particularly within our selves, faith and beliefs, ideas, Emancipation, authority and path. It helps at the same time to work to perceive positive currents, counter-hegemonic streams everywhere, particularly in the *other*. (Footnote – 2, given in the end of Part – B)

However, Tiep Hien also note the other aspect of values, acts, individuals and organisations where they are relatively solid-like and stable structures, with more or less fixed boundaries. When we look from this angle these categories (individuals, acts or values...) can be seen as having characteristics like 'good' or 'bad'. Speaking less judgementally and more realistically, some play more of a positive role and some negative in certain phases and specific situations. However they have another aspect too, that is more like fluid and patterns of flowing currents – interconnected and inter-creating. These streams and traditions can only be shifting shades of grey.

Here we note, Tiep Hien nowhere deny the value and existence of the individual (or organisation). In accordance with their perspective, the individual is like a catalyst that is created and filled with positive and negative connections, patterns and currents – in *interbeing*. The catalyst holds on to these currents, re-synthesises and recreates them into a newer shade. Through this process the catalyst (individual) creatively enhances the *interbeing* and also itself. Likewise it's (the catalyst's) stagnation and negativity also belongs to life's absurdity.

WORKING FOR SENSITIVITY; STRIVING AGAINST OUR OWN EGOTISM, EVEN EMANCIPATORY;

Egotism is so insidious and complex that it can even feed upon and manipulate the experience of victim-hood. Thus for example, being exploited as a worker may connect one to other exploited people and groups; but it is no criteria that the same (experience of one specific type of exploitation) would connect one's sensitivity to the pain of other types of oppressed. These categories might be easily visible, like women or dalit. These may (as it is mostly) be amorphous, mist-like, and invisible like the so-called 'unfit', 'meek' or 'just' some broken person.

Moreover, any particular form of victim-hood can also create a kind of block/egotism that may blind one to the infinite varieties of other type of victims. It can also block one from seeing the victimiser currents flowing inside him/her. Even when one is at the bottom in one sphere of exploitation, one can be a victimiser in other spheres and moments of life. It is not to say that there are no victims. This is surely a crucial aspect of persons and groups. There are classes of victims as well as hierarchies within them. There are also so many different kinds of processes of victimisation. A victimizer in one situation can be a victim in the other. Tiep Hien strive to understand the system as a negative eco-system that creates both the victim and the victimiser.

Egotism is so insidious and complex that it can even feed upon and manipulate our most authentic experience around our guilt, "We as belonging to categories of victimisers". (Footnote – 3, given in the end of Part – B) Many of us, driven by ideals and feelings of guilt for being in victimiser class, join the struggle of victims against Domination. We enter the movement with the notion of sacrifice. Strangely, often this feeling of sacrifice begins to make us feel great. Here our experience of grandiosity and our identification with our significant work gets enmeshed. We become protective, uncritical and begin believing too strongly in our kind of work. Our world moves around our authenticity and commitment. This anchoring can make us insensitive and arrogant towards other kinds of victimisation, existence and struggles. In this situation, the *seeds of future suffering* may grow in us.

If we, those who are born in these spaces outside the have-nots join the struggle against Hierarchy, for the exploited but alienate ourselves from our victimisation by Domination, our resistance and pain, take a superior stance of sacrificing for the other – can we fight the negative eco-system holistically?

The realisation of *Interbeing* and doing Tiep helps us to strive to go beyond these closed boxes (of particular victimhood on one side, guilt on the other and the suffering of the 'non-victims'). There are uncountable and intermeshed currents of victim-hood and victimisers, suffering and compassion, vernaculars of reason and their perceptions – outside our awareness, outside anything we can imagine. However, they all contribute to form our minds. The more we realise our limitations, and strive to connect to the social collage inside our self and relationships, the more will we be able to open the different doors of our sensitivities.

We perceive Domination/Hierarchy as a vast negative eco-system destroying everyone everywhere. *Counter-Domination hence is the friendship amongst currents of resistance flowing through each of its niches*

and nooks. This mostly means the spaces of people as victims, but it includes even the spaces of victimisers. These currents and patterns of resistance and compassion can be visible and organised or invisible and diffuse. Thus for instance, it is well known that each of the sections within the workers must connect positively to each other in order to deepen struggles of the workers as a whole. However, it also needs to connect with the struggles of women, dalit, others – the resistance against competition, commodification and insensitivity everywhere – even amongst people within the victimiser classes. The entire eco-system of resistance and compassion is vital to each category. Each of its sections is enriching and creating others and also the whole.

LIVING ENTITIES, BUT LIVING CONNECTIONS, PATTERNS AND CURRENTS TOO

Tiep Hien look at entities [individuals, relationships, clusters, values (like compassion, anti-egotism), outlooks and so on] as eco-systems, the architecture of junctions and patterns with large bunches of currents, positive and negative, forming, flowing, connecting, clashing and ever changing. They also see these currents and connections to be complex and living entities (similar to individuals). For Tiep Hien these currents have characteristics like hegemony, servility and egotism along with positive ones.

Tiep Hien thus see these currents as creating enrichment, and also getting into conflicts and clashes with each other. They see these enrichments and conflicts as new currents, connections, patterns and traditions and seek to examine their consequences.

Thus *vertical connections, patterns and currents*, at the macro level or in our daily life are the *trees, seeds and soil* of Domination. On the other side, *horizontal* connections are mutually beneficial, positive and libertarian.

MOVING BEYOND THE VANGUARDISM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Most organised traditions of social change, theist or atheist, believe: “The supreme ability of the human race is *consciousness* (and the guidance of true authority, science or god) – the highest part of our mind. Endowed with this, we can struggle against our ‘lower self’ – the ‘ordinary’ mind with its opportunist, insensitive and irrational ‘subconscious’, and our illogical social conditioning.” Then there are other traditions that believe this *consciousness* as having a mystical *conscience* inside (in touch with higher entities), that is even higher, to guide us. In effect, most intellectual, ideological, philosophical, religious and psychological traditions have so far maintained the divide between different levels of our mind. They have also perpetuated a perspective that thereby has hierarchy built into it. Here, the so-called ‘higher’ – conscious aspect of our mind (or the conscience) is accorded a superior position as special favour of God or biological evolution, on grounds of morality or reason....

Tiep Hien belong to the streams that rebelled against the mainstreams mentioned above. They see negative and positive currents both as flowing, interacting with and forming all aspects of our mind — that is its conscious, sub-conscious, un-conscious, and even our conscience, whatever one calls it. Moreover, these exist at the different levels of the body (Footnote – 4, given in the end of Part – B), individual, relationships and

society. All these aspects of mind influence and form each other without any permanent hierarchy, superior or inferior status. According to Tiep Hien, all these aspects and connections help and also hinder our struggles.

Thus, *consciousness* is not some superior *thing-in itself* that some leader, theory, some 'vanguard' or *someone* has. Hence there are no gurus, science or path on some higher plane to give us light and lead permanently. (All these can help us to some extent, in some situations, or hinder us). Tiep Hien see consciousness not just as some *thing* you or I possess, or that exist *somewhere*. In their view, "My body also has consciousness; each of my relationships, even the ones I am not aware of, has a *mind* and consciousness of its own. Thus what I believe to be my consciousness is really a vast partnership, an ensemble or a rainforest, with uncountable members. Consciousness is thus filled with connections, jostling, alliances, manipulations, conflicts. There is no perfect democracy, but no permanent hierarchy as well." Here, consciousness can be conceived as a vast eco-system – tiny currents of practice, experience, compassion and understanding, flowing through bodies, individuals, relationships, clusters that connect and create its inconceivable oceanic *body*. (See, *Greening of the Self*, Joana Macy, resources p.)

Such realisations help us to build up scepticism about our faith in our *consciousness* and even *conscience*. We become aware about how negative currents manipulate and construct our mind at all levels – consciousness, conscience, sub-conscious, body-mind – all its perceptions, illusions and legitimisations. On the other side such a perspective invites us to open our mind to the power of the visible and invisible positive and friendly currents and potentials connecting, emerging and flowing in all these levels of our mind/body.

Thus, Tiep-Hien's view helps us to fight arrogance that is so rooted in our faith and dependence on an overvalued personal or group consciousness, vertical authority or even our ethical self, our conscience. This view helps us to take a non-arrogant path towards strength and understanding — by realising the ecological/interbeing of our self, and striving to open-up and connect to the immense variety of positive currents flowing inside and outside us.

This view in no way denies the role of consciousness, at the different levels of the personal, relationships, group, community and society. Consciousness is also like a 'catalyst' that connects and recreates but one that keeps on changing and getting created by subconscious and the *collective unconscious*. Here the interbeing of consciousness, subconscious and all other processes of the eco-system of social mind and the whole of Nature are crucial. The 'catalyst' (consciousness) is created by and filled with both the positive and negative currents of the eco-system (and their connections/patterns) of life and Nature. The role of the 'catalyst' is to hold on to these visible and invisible currents (that are influencing the subconscious and conscious), dig, break, and then to some extent re-synthesise and re-create them. The positive consciousness then becomes the connection/network of positive currents in the *eco-system of consciousness*. This is a crucial force in personal, group and other levels of society.

RETAINING THE PARADOX: "LETTING GO, WHILE LIVING WITH OUR ANCHORS"

To be *in touch with the true mind* also means to consciously strive to become free (less caught up) of anchors.

The strongest argument justifying anchors, symbols or authority comes from the very same paternalistic and managerial tradition that creates them. The 'practical revolutionary' in us believes, "Most people have a dependent mindset today, they feel secure and functional only in a system that claims to have the key to solve all problems. To pool and concentrate our emotional/psychic energy for emancipation, we need this kind of 'good' anchoring to overcome 'bad' anchors of the mighty Establishment. It is this that will help us to rise above our individual egotism and work collectively." There is a lot of truth in it. It is all the more so in those social spaces where the individual faces extreme suffocation and has much less space to grow. However, is it the whole story?

Tiep Hien too believe in being appropriate and practical and yet they address the concern somewhat differently. They bring us to an apparently paradoxical position of recognizing our anchors and yet striving against clinging to them.

This calls for addressing a central question: What according to Tiep Hien is implied by, *becoming free of our anchors*?

Firstly, Tiep Hien do not call for giving up anchors. *They recognise that even Buddha must have had attachments and anchors.* They rather appeal that we become conscious of our anchors and strive to loosen them. This would change our relationship with our anchors, making it more horizontal. This in itself would bring a kind of openness and freedom.

We all need props, handholds and crutches to engage with and travel across difficult patches in life. Tiep Hien appeal to meditate upon, how these props creep inside our minds and become permanent entanglements. They appeal that we strive to de-link our ego/pride/identity from our anchor, thereby making it less of an anchor and more of an aid and a friend. At the same time, they also say, we must give our highest commitment to remain associated with the positive side of connection with action, which may be dependent upon the support we get from our anchors.

Secondly, most of the time we might find it difficult to avoid such anchoring, dependency, faith and authoritarian organising while standing up against the immense power of the *Desert*. In fact, processes of the *Spring* will mostly be flawed in one way or the other, enmeshed with the streams of authoritarianism/dependency – the *Desert* inside us. It is the ability of the positive currents inside every nook to connect with each other that is of essence. This is what we need to nurture.

This (loosening of our anchors), according to Tiep Hien, can give us an alternate source of energy and a better way to work together. They believe that by such reduction of our anchoring, we can access an immense source of nourishment, mutually and laterally. We can then open-up more, to tap the positive currents flowing within diverse egalitarian activism – that are different from ours – however enmeshed in negative currents/patterns they may be. These may be initiated by bodhisattvas, Marxists, socialists, Ambedkarites, by 'ordinary' people or by any positive transaction, however momentary. This gives us an abundant source of energy. This

gives the ability to co-operate more even with the real world of flawed streams, and yet manage with less compromises and hierarchical organising.

OUR REFLECTION – B-2

Inner vs. Outer Change – War Amongst Religions And Scientific Socialism

In the Tiep Hien view, Domination is the intergrowth and connection of negative patterns and processes, even those inside positive streams. Strength of Liberation lies in deepening the basis of the interbeing, better connection of the positive processes, wherever these might be. Domination and Hegemony also organise connections amongst negative currents and patterns like egotism hidden inside the positive streams and thereby create conflict amongst them. Such conflict can acquire much power and a sort of life of their own, becoming a new pernicious tradition.

Historically a big overlapping family of such hegemonic traditions has been the fracture and war of positive streams that are variously described as: Outer change vs. Inner change (or practice directed inward vs. that directed outward); change in 'Base' (economic mode of production) vs. change in 'Superstructure'; Compassion vs. Understanding; 'Organised' vs. 'Informal' activism; Small change (Reform) vs. 'Structural transformation' (Revolution); one stream of compassion (that is universal or for one type of suffering) vs. other streams; one stream of anti-egotism (for instance the struggle against egotism at the level of personal self) vs. other streams of struggle against egotism (at the different levels of societal categories, traditions, organisations and Establishments).

By 'inner change' we mean striving to change our self, our inner mind. It is not only changing the relationship with one's own self but also with others around, 'even' with animals and Nature.

It means initiatives to change, in the terrain of our self, relationships and community life, our ethics, culture, spirituality, self-respect, autonomy, values and norms. It means nurturing horizontal currents of love, compassion and empathy to connect and flow. It means nurturing currents of anti-egotism. Tiep Hien call this terrain the 'soil and seeds' - where hegemony and counter-hegemony both operate. These currents flow both via our conscious and sub-

conscious, visibly and invisibly. In this light, we will explore the complex relation amongst inner change, organised sectors and informal terrain.

By 'Outer change' we will mean the struggle to change the external sources/ systems of oppression – class hierarchy, State, patriarchy/ paternalism, casteism/racism, centralist development – right down to meritocracy and able-ism'. All these are structures of Domination/Hierarchy based on material and social inequality and power, even those that are based on 'vertical' organisation of compassion and love (Development and welfare Statism, charity establishments of Dominational religions). The self-proclaiming and visible aspects of these struggles are called here as the 'organised sector'. It also means to struggle against the 'egotism' that permeates all Dominational structures and streams.

War Amongst Dominational religion and Organised Scientific Socialism In 19th century Europe

[This section is not based on or meant to be a study of European history. Our intention here is more metaphorical, to illustrate a way of examining spaces within emancipation, as streams /patterns of traditions in conflict.]

Domination/Hierarchy can be seen to be constituted in two central ways, *outer*, and *inner*. Thus, till the 19th century in Europe, medieval State, exploiting classes, patriarchy and their associated Dominational religions used their totalitarian power and violence from above to enforce the *outer*, material exploitation. On the other side they (the cultural/spiritual processes organised by Domination) reinforced these systems of exploitation by organising the *seeds and the soil, the inner* spaces. Thus, Domination would try to organise our daily, personal and community life and even the sector of mutual aid, compassion and love, ethics, altruism and our strivings against egotism. It (Domination) would play down the issue of *outer* change, claiming, "Changing the *inside* is primary. Only then will the *outside* change."

At that time, the streams of liberation were exceedingly fragmented. Confined to communities and localities, these streams would speak in thousands of different languages. These too were mostly patched up from the languages of the *Dominational religion*.

By the 19th century, there were many attempts to add the capacities of reason, creating a common language and building up co-operation within these multi-coloured *inner* and *outer* streams of change. These were variously called the *Democratic, Utopian* and *Christian socialist* streams.

SUDDENLY, A NEW FORCE ENTERED THIS ARENA - THE ATHEISTIC 'SCIENTIFIC SOCIALIST' TRADITION

This was given a coherent & organised form by many socialists, anarchists and Marxists.

They were extremely successful in exposing the blatant unreason of the medieval dominant Church. They could give a common language and legitimacy to the streams of liberation using the explosively growing influence of science and technology. They found rapid acceptance in the urban middle and working classes and also some sections of the new bourgeoisie.

"All that which cannot be seen or measured does not exist or is only secondary," became the war cry of scientific socialism against the superstition-based medieval State and Dominational religion. This would challenge the bastions of the *unseen*, the regime of God and Heaven, demons and Hell with the full power of *natural science*. "What are those religious authorities – guardians of *morality* and *compassion* doing? Is not their real purpose to hide the visible realities - class and material disparity, exploitation and the totalitarian force of the State with invisible categories such as *kingdom and laws of God*, compassion, love and anti-egotism?"

Thus economy, money, labour, exploitation, commodity, classes, State and so on, all that could be 'seen' and 'measured' became primary – the *Base*. Mostly invisible categories like the diffuse, non-institutional, socio-cultural aspects of Domination and counter-Domination, compassionate mutual aid or similar values, ethics and relationships, their currents and traditions, were declared to be secondary, the *Superstructure*.

The old Establishment too gave scientific socialists legitimacy by launching loud attacks against them. Scientific socialists grew rapidly and often became the most visible opponents of Domination. Ironically, this made them an easy prey to the streams of egotism/hegemony within – expansionism, arrogance and one-sidedness. Gradually scientific socialists got into attacking the sources and roots of their own *compassion and understanding* – the traditions of *compassion, caring, resistance, introspection, striving to overcome egotism*. Were not these rooted in the earlier Utopian, many a time non-atheistic, and the mostly invisible and diffuse traditions of inner-change and resistance – the *informal terrain*?

In such a *war*, if one shows some openness to views associated with the *enemy* side, it is considered a sign of weakening and one can get stampeded to go all the way in it. Moreover here, a clear stand, even when it is one sided, keeps supporters in faith. This, taking of a firm and strident stand is more important than positions that look vague and ambiguous to supporters, even if it is closer to reality and truth. Thus, the scientific socialists felt insecure in declaring the invisible entities e.g. relationships, streams or traditions, like those of compassion, ethics and values, anti-egotism, forgiveness and informal resistance to be as primary as the visible ones. This would be synonymous to acknowledging the existence of invisible entities. They were apprehensive that such an acknowledgement would immediately enable the church to shove in and claim legitimacy for their Gods and Demons!

Hence they declared the *reality* to be based upon visible, *measurable* things. After all, 'proper' sciences, like physics, were habituated to deal with this kind of 'reality' only. The study of society became like another branch of *Science* (that had emerged from the study of the non-living). This led to the belief among the *scientific* socialists that they had *discovered* the science, the *laws of motion of social change* (as Newton did in the *natural science*).

They believed, "In order to cure the disease (the system of exploitation and egotism), we have to analyse scientifically so that we discover its main '*root*'. Only then can we plan and act to abolish it. Mere goodness of heart, love and compassion will not help to eradicate the epidemic". They also believed that they had *discovered* this '*root*' to be, *the system of private ownership of the means of production*. Thus their 'scientific' faith was, "Revolution must *abolish* this system. Only this *key* can open the floodgates of humanist ethics and compassion."

Hence, scientific socialists considered that, to give importance to the question of human *spirits* (*culture, meaning, compassion, respect, ethics, anti-egotism and values*), *inner* change (at the level of *Superstructure*) and small 'unconnected' reforms before the *revolution* (*outer* change at the level of *base*) was like putting the cart before the horse. At best, it was a mistake – 'unscientific, utopian and reformist'.

Thus the *informal* terrain, its 'ordinary' compassion, anti-egotism, forgiveness and diffuse resistance constituting bulk of the currents of counter-Domination, was believed to be secondary. It was even considered as 'bourgeois humanism' or 'religious idealism'. It was believed, "Invisible aspects of Domination (hegemony, insensitivity, egotism) can be opposed and proper humanism created only in the crucible of proletarian class struggle, that too after adding 'scientific' analysis to it".

The highly articulate scientific socialists thus launched a *war* to clean up the "muddle-headed, reformist, sentimental and unscientific" currents in the socialist traditions. Engel wrote *Socialism: Utopian or Scientific*. A barrage of purifying fire was directed against all who were refusing to accept the 'rigorous science of revolution'.

This fracture (amongst scientific socialism on one side and the *informal* terrain and streams of resistance associated with utopian socialist, religion etc. on the other) spread all over Europe –beginning with the formation of the *First International* in the middle of 19th century.

The scientific socialists believed, "Modern capitalism will demolish and co-opt all those sentimental, religious and vague humanistic currents and do-gooders. On that clean slate will rise the modern working class, the Proletariat. They will grasp the 'science of revolution' and move towards demolishing capitalism, the root of their (and mankind's) misery."

They, the scientific socialists mostly saw as valuable, the *visible* (tangible and measurable) *political-economy of wealth, commodity and the state*. They lost the eye to see the other, the intangible, invisible *political-economy* and *political-ethical-philosophy* of culture – the *wealth* of human spirit and intellect. This is the sphere where compassion and self-respect, understanding and meaning, introspection, ethics and anti-egotism, our pain and joy are engineered, produced and exploited — distributed, legitimised and appropriated.

This also is a vast terrain where the conflict between Domination and Hegemony on one side and its opposition on the other is played out. This rebellion goes on in the terrain of persons, relationships, and community and spiritual life, traditions and rituals, transactions, mythologies, dreams, codes and discourses, celebrations and festivals and so on. These can be couched in any symbol system, religious or not. Resistance here struggles to reproduce and reclaim positive ethics, currents of humanity and mutual aid, emancipatory joy and pain in the *inner* spaces. This ocean, consisting of apparently unconnected tiny choices/acts of sensitivity and compassionate support for sufferers and their resistance was always there. These currents of *small change*, resistance and humanism in our daily lives (that do not seek to Dominate) were the main soil and source of our emancipatory ethics, *compassion and understanding*. Such currents were also present within the numerous declared traditions of counter-Domination. These expressed themselves in the language of the folk, heretic and utopian.

The tradition of scientific socialism did not understand that these very currents of sensitivity and ethics had played a crucial role in creating their own desire for socialism! They devalued, made themselves blind to, and even stood against all these. They just saw these currents to be *unscientific*, ineffective and even *reactionary*, or at the most the *sigh of the oppressed, in the secondary terrain of culture and superstructure*. Thus, the crucial capacity of linkages based on reason and reflections associated with science got blocked to and even turned against its roots in compassion and love, its deepest source.

For instance, consider the streams of compassion and understanding associated with the most extensive type of suffering, caused by Capital, for everyone subordinated to it. This, in scientific socialism, got torn from the rest of the eco-systems of compassion, anti-egotism and resistance. This led to fractures within each of these streams/eco-systems. This created the tradition of conflict between what is called common compassion, and the specific compassion and reason associated with resistance against economic exploitation; between the *informal* terrain, and the organised sector of socialism; between resistance to political-economic authoritarianism/ egotism/ hegemonism at the societal and global level, with this opposition at personal, interpersonal, cluster level; between practice for *outer change* with that for *inner change*.

All this left Domination, Dominational religion and the tradition of values and interpersonal transactions organised by it, without any clear and co-ordinated opposition. Thus, these were free to exploit, dominate and subvert all the positive streams in the realm of ethics and human spirits, *inner* spaces as well as the *informal* terrain. Thus, the streams of compassion and love, ethics, anti-egotism and spirituality were torn to a great extent from the world of organised anti-oppression activism and reason. They (the streams of compassion, ethics, anti-egotism etc.) were re-defined (by *Dominational religion and the traditions of norms* organised by Domination, like Statism, patriarchy, capitalism, casteism and so on) as *God-realisation/surrender, charity, service, morality, discipline and character*. A closed system of principles, habits and traditions – special types of ‘norms’ and *support systems* for living were organised. The architecture of the paternalistic *family*, the so-called ‘normal’ community and welfare State was imposed upon humanity as a chain of interwoven anchors. Scientific socialism with all its analysis, was not even equipped to oppose these.

What happens to the streams of compassion, human spirits and anti-egotism associated with 'inner-change', when they are torn off from 'outer-change' (traditions of organised struggle against systems of oppression) and it's 'understanding'?

In today's world, Domination/Hierarchy, exploitation, egotism, colonialism, militarism, nationalism, greed and wastefulness driven by consumerism has become an all-devouring plague. Here 'Normalcy', 'Civilisation' and 'Development' are the controlling devils. Even most of the non-human sentient societies are being exterminated. Here, do not most of our suffering, directly or indirectly, get caused by its *plague*?

Moreover, our *material* resources (labour and Nature) are not the only entities that are looted by the establishment. Our capacity (spirit) for compassion, respect, friendship, joy and intellect, creating meaning for human ends is devoured too. Famines and wars hardly move us. Official compassion, 'Development', 'Relief' and 'Rights' become the big business and politics of Establishment and its organisations (like State, its institutions and parties, World Bank, U.N. and their vertical NGO processes and so on.). Domination had already subjugated the sphere of compassion, love, forgiveness and anti-egotism. All this has created a spiritual emptiness and crisis. With the different streams of scientific socialism (social democracy, mainstream marxism) collapsing during this crisis, Domination, welfare Establishment and consumerism are making an overwhelming comeback.

On one side we have the streams of compassion, resistance and understanding that are specifically associated with the victims of a particular mode of exploitation. *On the other, we have* the streams of *common and universal dimension* of compassion, empathy, forgiveness and anti-egotism. All these flow at various levels of the self, cluster, and organization. What happens when they are separated, torn from each other? This is one of the main reasons that has led to the failure and degeneration of victorious anti-colonialism and socialism of all kinds, and then finally to today's plague. It is like the tradition of empathy losing its eyes and limbs. Such blind and fractured compassion, resistance and anti-egotism become an easy prey to all kinds of Domination.

These clashes have only strengthened the vertically organised power and centralism on both sides of the Domination and organised scientific socialism. – See REFLECTIONS – B-5, pp.

Consequences in India

In India, in the 20th Century such fractures have led to extensive conflicts, and traditions of conflicts. We can suggest some points for consideration.

I. Informal streams, whether associated with religion or not, of compassion and anti-egotism vs. organised scientific socialism, Marxist, socialist, rationalist and even old *scientific* nationalists.

Establishment associated organized religions in India had co-opted and dominated much of the informal streams and eco-systems of compassion, love, forgiveness, understanding, and also the streams of rising above and struggling against egotism, for thousands of years. They emphasized the general/universalist and personal aspects of these eco-systems to the point of excluding all else – particularly those that had anything to do with the egotism of the ruling authorities. These fractured categories would then be put under *vertical* definition and control. Then the specific dimensions of these eco-systems (of compassion and understanding), for instance sensitivity within and for dalits, women, toilers were drowned, made invisible and even illegitimate under the flood of *universalist love and forgiveness* ruled by God, King and Gurus, 'religion' and 'norm'. Similarly, struggling against egotism was also made a personal moral imperative in isolation. All the egotism/authoritarianism of Domination (God, King, Gurus and norms) was made invisible. In fact, surrender to these authorities was defined as *anti-egotism*.

Organized scientific socialism and other such streams, whose very root was compassion for (the largest) specific category of the oppressed, rebelled against such traditions of organized religion. In the process *they threw the baby with the bathwater*. Struggling against the one-sidedness and hypocrisy of the values upheld by the Dominational religion and State, they became sceptical and blind towards the informal streams of values and ethics. Ironically, the intensity of their struggles for justice and specific compassion tore them off from the universal dimension of compassion, forgiveness and personal dimensions of the struggle against egotism (as a general entity).

(However, in India, the omnipotent traditions of paternalism have created a paradoxical situation. We find here extensive co-existence amongst the tradition of the revolutionary and the organised religious / paternalistic streams. This is gross and visible in the space of community and personal life – the patriarchal family, festivals (dominated by Dominational religions), ashrams.... Though large fractures amongst this paradoxical situation did get created, but the acceptance of these paternalistic institutions have been omnipresent in all socialist traditions.)

II. Gandhian streams (emphasising *inner* change, ethics, universal compassion, priority to the hindmost, de-centralisation / opposition to State and capitalist *development*, anti-egotism ...) vs. Marxist and other socialists (emphasising the *outer*, class hierarchy based economy, taking side, victim's point of view and organising ...).

This has been the largest fracture within the *organised* egalitarian traditions. (See Introduction, p.)

III. Marxist and other scientific socialists vs.

all those who are opposed to the 'path of capitalist development' , who are neither atheists nor agreeable to leadership by scientific socialism.

These are all kinds of rebellion and resistance of the victims and also the positive streams and subaltern traditions within the community life of adivasis, dalits and neo-Buddhists, artisans, peasants, shramanical/folk traditions like - bauls, sufis and others. Then, there are as always, the much vaster but invisible and diffuse

traditions of all *mutual aid* and *common* empathy within the *informal* sector. Scientific socialists consider these streams as 'utopian' and 'reformists', 'superstitious' or 'reactionary' or passive and irrelevant...

[We must mention here that the splits we are describing are often obscured by the omnipresent problems of medieval and conservative norms and patriarchy, authoritarianism and communal sectarianism in these (folk, subaltern and informal) terrains. It seems that many a time the oppressive social situation of these communities make their emancipatory initiatives even more vulnerable to power, authoritarianism and consumerism! Despite all this, it is a mystery how their anti-oppression and subversive streams keep surfacing, engaging with contemporary reality.]

Combining *inner* and *outer* change was always attempted, in howsoever limited ways, in the tradition of *Satya Sodhak Samaj* movement associated with Phule in the beginning of the last century; neo-Buddhist movement associated with Ambedkar in the 50s; the anti-brahmanical dravidian self-respect movement associated with Peryiar; the large Gandhian socialist traditions; the little rationalist stream associated with Gora that began in 30s in Andhra. A rich tradition of socio-cultural-spiritual *inner* change (however enmeshed in hegemony) that also stood for *outer* change was always there. These were either not 'seen', or were vilified (by highlighting their negative sides) in the old Marxist tradition.

In this era, both mainstream Marxism, Gandhian (and other streams of socialism), dalit, adivasi, dravidian/ anti-casteist and all these complementary traditions are dying because of the onslaught of commerce, development, welfarism and hegemony, the clash of medieval authoritarianism vs. consumerist individualism and so on. Even in such hard times, we refuse to recognise and learn from our complimentary strengths and help each other!

However, things are different in the radical fringes associated with all these mainstream traditions. There we can see initiatives to help and learn from each other in innumerable, invisible and tentative ways.

Seeing The *Interbeing* Of The *Outer And Inner*, We Get A New Generation Of Conceptual Tools To Analyse The Classic Problem Of *Reformism Vs. Revolution*.

What acts of social activism lead more towards co-option into Establishment, deepening and beautification of the status quo? On the other side, what acts strengthen the radical opposition to the system? From the beginning, Marxist tradition understood the crucial importance of this question. However, on this question, they always got into 'left' sectarian blind-lanes and then finally, all-out co-option! 'Left' (deviation), then 'Right' (reformism), then again Left and finally Right – has been our history.

Earlier, most Marxists in India and Asia accepted the *line of demarcation* between 'reformism' and 'revolution' as drawn by the 'authority' of the Russian revolution – Lenin and the 3rd International. "Any work or reform that strengthens the true communist Party, the vanguard organisation of the working class, its cutting edge, is revolutionary. Any reform that does not do so is 'reformism' or 'bourgeois humanism'." The non-Leninist Marxist streams (those associated with Rosa Luxemburg and some others) had the broader line of demarcation; "class struggle of workers against Capital (or, *only those struggles that challenge Capital as a surfacing*)

whole, as in its narrower versions) is revolutionary". Anything else, for example service for the sufferers that is not directly associated with and adding to such working class activism / organisation was regarded as 'reformist' or even 'bourgeois humanism'.

Today in the present context, many of us would find this Leninist or Marxist demarcation narrow and vanguardist. We seem to have rejected those classic lines of the Marxist demarcation. However, in our contemporary times of paralysis and chaos, we have not even started to re-examine the issues. Today, single issue, small group and local activism is preponderant. That is not bad in itself. It is surely better than the earlier vanguardist monoliths. But, the problem today is, there is no line of demarcation at all between 'reformism and revolution', between immediate, short term and long-range goals. Here, utter confusion reigns. Anything goes. A storm of omnipotent reformism reigns and there is no clearly visible opposition and shelter. This in fact strengthens doctrinarism within Marxism. We have reason to wonder, "During such storm why should we leave our house, however old and flawed, if there are no 'better alternatives'?"

There are immense traditions of compassion, mutual aid, anti-egotism, understanding and resistance within the oppressed people. But the movement to reclaim and connect these traditions is exceedingly fragmented and voiceless. So these mostly get vertically connected, exploited and drowned in the ocean of 'reform and development', 'welfare and charity' controlled by Domination (the states and their agents), its Banks, U.N., the vertical 'welfarist' Statism and their mainstream institutionalised 'NGO' sector. The 'spiritual' and 'welfare' Establishments of the Dominational religion are everywhere. These champions of 'inner change', charity and welfare have become the new heroes today. They have become a vast multicoloured reformist 'movement' from above.

On the other side, the traditions of parliamentary *tactics*, Party/reformism and union bureaucracy – the co-opted *Social-Democracy* is more powerful than ever. Most of us – whether from 2nd or 3rd International or Gandhian traditions, CPI (M) or Samata Dal, or the Social Democratic/Christian Socialist/Labour Parties of Europe – are 'in it' these days! (Footnote – 5, given in the end of Part – B)

We emphasise, the Tiep Hien tradition do not seek to by-pass, *replace* or give some solution to these debates and questions, old and new. These debates are even more crucial today. It is vital that these debates must be made broad (connecting the realisations of different organised and the informal sectors), historical and contemporary. Our tiep hien seek to *add* some new dimensions, some new conceptual tools to those classic concerns. We give some examples below.

INNER VS. OUTER, REFORMISM VS. REVOLUTION CONFLICT – IN DIFFERENT TRADITIONS

The influence of hinduism on the Gandhian stream led to a tradition of conflict with dalit emancipation that reigns since the 1930s. Radical currents within dalit liberation could clearly see that *reforming* hinduism from within – inner change of the hindu mind, will not solve the problem. They believed that a structural, *outer* change, overthrowing of hindu religion based on varna/caste system can only create proper basis for liberation

of the dalit. The acrimonious Ambedkar-Gandhi debates in the 30s represented this fracture. This was so severe that despite Gandhi's beginning to concede the truth of many of Ambedkar's position in 1945, the tradition of conflict goes on even today. Most socialist streams originating near the Gandhian tradition do not support the neo-Buddhist movement of the dalits for rejecting hindu religion and creating an alternative till today.

This problem is more general. To the tradition of dalit/OBC emancipation, brahmanism (varna/caste-hierarchy) is *outer*, the systemic and *primary*, and class and gender hierarchy (particularly within dalit/OBC) is *secondary* and *inner*. For marxists, the class / economic hierarchy is the *outer*, *primary*, and the caste hierarchy, particularly that within the working classes is the *inner*, the *secondary* problem. For women's emancipation, *patriarchy* is the *outer*, the establishment, the main enemy, and classism or casteism, particularly amongst women, is secondary, the *inner*, a matter of reform. Gandhian traditions give highest priority to *inner*, personal change, and setting up of the autonomous village community. All other *outer* – class/caste/gender hierarchy are believed to be resolvable via such change and also seen as the consequence of the same. Thus, each different stream builds up an outlook and tradition of practice against one of the dimensions of the *interbeing* of Domination – the one that it considers as primary and revolutionary.

This has its positive sides. Such *one-sided* processes can unite and empower one category of the oppressed and light up one aspect of Domination as nothing else. For instance, the *universalist* and multi-dimensional paradigms cannot light up the specific terrains intensely enough. However, these have their use too. They sensitise us to the *universalist* dimension more.

This is why our tiep hien do not offer themselves as a *better alternative* to those paradigms. They rather appeal to these specific priority centric streams, and also the *universalist* streams (like the socially engaged streams associated with religion) to interconnect better. Our tiep hien points out that it is the mutual learning and interconnection that creates better many-sidedness and universality, and this can only be done in ways that deepen and enrich the specific struggles as well.

Thus, people as workers, must not only join in the struggle against brahmanism/casteism, but also classism inside them. Women's emancipation must support anti-capitalist, anti-brahmanical struggles but also strive against patriarchy within (women). Each stream must strive to build-up cross-tradition enrichment. This will help the positive interbeing of resistance against the negative interbeing of Domination. This *positive interbeing*, the *Spring* is the source of all spirituality for Tiep-Hien.

Thus, the struggles for *outer* change must be geared to the strivings and streams of *inner* change. Economic, political and social struggles against the system and its opportunism and egotism must be geared to the *currents of cultural (spiritual) rebellion against various dimensions of hierarchy, opportunism and egotism within us, within the spaces of the struggles.*

Tiep-Hien's outlook throws much light here. In fact their concept of *interbeing* goes beyond the concept of combining synergistically. It sees how, at each moment, the *inner* and *outer* processes create each other, negatively as well as positively. We then begin to see categories like compassion, understanding, anti-egotism, activism as complex eco-systems, connected in positive as well as negative ways with *inner* and *outer*. The more we realise these, the more will we be able to reduce hierarchy and vertical power building in the inner spaces. This will help to raise a voice against reformism and co-option in the *outer* change sectors. We will discuss this later.

On the other side, the strivings for *inner change* must be seen with awareness and criticality, as being linked both to hegemony and counter-hegemony. Helping someone in distress or striving against our egotism has positive as well as negative currents flowing and connecting through it. We must strive to reduce its connection with the *top-down* 'spiritual' and 'welfare' traditions and Establishments mentioned above and empower the alternatives. We must reduce the element of paternalism that is enmeshed in the process of helping and being helped. We must be able to see and help to connect the currents that strive against any sort of up-climbing and vertical processes. We must celebrate its connections with the struggles and traditions for *outer* change. All these will help us in struggling against the tides of reformism, fragmentation, lack of holism and co-option in the terrain of *inner* change.

OUR REFLECTION – B-3

Tiep Is Striving Against Any 'Vertical' Spirituality That Stands Above The 'Horizontal' Currents and Connections

We will be discussing the significance of rejecting vertical spirituality, and empowering the *horizontal* sources of compassion and understanding under the heading: *Egalitarian Cultural (Spiritual) Rebellion – I; Reclaiming Spirituality or ethics and culture, from the prisons of Establishment and Dominational religion.* - REFLECTION C-2 pp.

OUR REFLECTION – B-4

Doing 'Tiep' – 'Creating Positive Connections'

These *strings* represent *compassion and understanding*, and other positive currents (counter-hegemony) in our model of *mind-as-streams-and-seas* within *social-oceans*,. *Tiep* means, seeking and tapping into these positive strings or currents. It also means *tying these strings (connecting positive currents) to make them longer - greening the Spring* and recycling nourishment.

OUR REFLECTION – B-5

HIEN – Making A Change In Real Life, Here And Now

surfacing

Acting, witnessing, caring and practicing directed inwards and outwards is a core source of compassion and understanding.

(Following up from our discussion in Part A, p.)

... one central task of the third domain is to examine how Domination and Hegemony splits, blocks and fractures all these compassions of different colours (in the eco-system of compassion, understanding, witnessing and practicing), and thus connects them vertically to the systems of domination. In the third domain we also try to understand how and when helping a sick/impaired person (or any other being, 'even' an insect) can enhance the political movement against exploitation and when it does not do so. (Footnote – 6, given in the end of Part – B) We also explore here as to how counter-Domination seeks to connect these currents laterally and horizontally, enriching each other and the eco-system of resistance.

What Is This Problem, “Of Getting Caught In The World Of Doctrines And Ideas and Losing Connection With Practice” Of Liberation?

How can “Ideas of compassion, understanding and practice” block us from implementing compassion, understanding and practice? Why does our pre-occupation with Ideology and even with theories of revolution (Footnote – 7, given in the end of Part – B) take us into sectarian boxes and away from practicing compassion and revolution?

Or we can ask, how can the intense commitment towards one type of sensitivity, *compassion and understanding* block one from being sensitive and supportive towards *compassion and understanding* of other types? How such block can even, *create more trouble and destruction in the world?* Why, here as well as in the fourth sutra they give such an overriding importance to *personal, informal and direct identification and engagement with suffering - here and now?* The ‘practical’ activist inside us would rather ask, “During such a war, should Tiep Hien not have put all their resources in the anti-colonial or peace movement? At such times, should we be bothering so much about engaging with the *myriads of sufferings around?* Won't it diffuse our energy at a time when our country is suffering so?”

Earlier we saw how hegemony can *fracture the interbeing of inner change* (particularly the *informal sector*) with the *outer (organised sector based on reason)*, and also of *compassion with understanding*. The same split is recurrently played, when in our zeal to abolish the social roots of suffering, we tend to become indifferent to its innumerable nuances ('engagement with suffering here and now'), within which the pain of everyday life is embedded. Then on one side, powerful traditions of organised-religion are left without any organised opposition, free to embrace the *inner* and the *informal sector*. On the other side, organised-revolution gets split with the *outer*, its strength of abstract reason, paradoxically, choking its roots in compassion.

This is one of the central problems seen in most tendencies of *organised sectors* of liberation.

We can easily see how it pervades the streams of *scientific socialism*. But, why and how does this happen, even in those streams that do not claim to be based on such *scientific* analyses, like *adivasi emancipation, surfacing*

Gandhian traditions or reform work associated with religion, spiritual movements? These later ones give high value to nurture sufferers and live authentically and humbly. But whenever they become large organisations, their zeal too often makes them myopic, regimented, bureaucratic and co-opted.

In the *informal* terrain, 'ordinary' people's efforts to help each other around suffering and exploitation mostly remain ineffective and distorted as they fail to connect with the social levels of the problem and larger mobilisation of resources. Paradoxically, when such (*informal*) initiatives become *organised*, more social and larger in scale, they often begin to get more distorted. This *catch-22* situation is possibly the most central problem of the third domain.

Why Does It Happen? Why Does It Recur Again And Again?

How our icons, concepts, organisations and specific categories of compassion, commitment for the downtrodden, at the level of the social and also the universal, become *vertical processes*? How do they get inflated and fetishised, becoming a power in them, subordinating and derailing us from the original purpose for which we created these icons and categories of compassion? How the connection of negative currents flowing through these icons, ideas and organisation often become a torrent that pits these *vertical processes* against the horizontal currents – compassion at mutual and interpersonal level?

We give below examples of how egotism/hegemony pits the 'organised' traditions against the 'informal' terrain, the outer against inner traditions of change, thereby distorting both.

1. In Marxism - look at the symbols (concepts) like *Scientific Analysis, Class-interest, Class Struggle, Leadership, Party, Revolution, and Power*. Look at even the *Proletarian Cultural Revolution* (in China) that claimed to 'cleanse revolution from the pollution of power'. These concepts were developed originally to aid and enhance the struggle against the roots of suffering. These were the means to pool our resources of compassion. However, let us examine what happens as we accumulate faith in these symbols and organise around them more and more. Then, these *symbols* acquire a strange power over us, blurring the very sensitivity and vision we started with. Engagement with suffering too often becomes secondary, as self-righteousness, attachment and rivalry around these *symbols* fragments unity. Gradually we create more suffering as we get co-opted into Establishment!

2. In Gandhism - over-valuing of symbols like *Truth, Guru, inner-voice, ahimsa, service, morality, asceticism, humility, even inner struggle against egotism* can open the gate to Domination within. The more social and State power we get to serve the sufferer the further we get moved away from suffering!

3. Inside anti-colonial, nationalist or sectional struggles, attachment to icons like *Mother Nation, Mother Sect, Messiahs, Parties and Liberation* etc. play a similar role.

4. In streams associated with religion, in order to create compassion, love and commitment to community, the concept of God (Buddha and Dhamma) in most religions enables to organise ourselves and

bring together our social resources. Nevertheless, over time, a subversive process begins. All of these icons meet an ironic fate. Sooner or later, they get turned into instruments of Domination.

5. In a different type of example, we can mention how storms of hegemony can tear personal, social and other kinds/dimensions of love apart (even inside all kinds of ethical and emancipatory spaces) and put them at each others throat. For instance, consider the 'Love for all' vs. 'Love for some'. This polarity ultimately distorts both.

We might be organising for social change in many kinds of traditions. Everywhere we find strangely similar and all-pervasive vertical categories, like the need for a strong and good 'Father', 'True Path', ideology, 'ism, correct theory, success and victory oriented organising creating similar distortions – however different these may be.

WERE THESE VERTICAL CONCEPTS AND SYMBOLS (IN ALL THESE ABOVE DIVERSE ORGANISED SECTORS) FETISHES AS SUCH?

Certainly not! Did these vertical concepts and icons not provide us with something to hold onto in life; to pool our psychic and collective resources; to struggle to connect and to overcome inequality and suffering better? It would be simplistic and falling in the trap of the *free market* to say, "Such icons are bad; those who run after them (consciously or not) enjoy power games; organising, politics and activism should be shunned." *The problem is to understand the situation in order to improve it, to criticise activism so as to make it more effective.*

The tragedy is that the insidious engine of hegemony mostly manipulates us. It can infiltrate into and hijack our zeal, energy, for doing good work, for its own game! Hegemony subtly identifies our egotism and dependency with an expansionist and vertical concept of, 'the need for victory of the correct idea/organisation/tradition'. As we strive and mobilise more of our energy for this kind of 'success', to empower these symbols, the intensity for and within our horizontal relationships (the energy available in relating to the diversity of suffering and persons around) keeps dwindling.

Thus, the *horizontal* (informal) sector is used and sacrificed for 'doing beautiful things with effectiveness' via the organised sector. Then, this becomes a fetish. Eventually, in a subtle way, expanding the project, empowering the icons become more important than the original concern for creating compassion and equality.

The positive connection (of ideas, icons and action for *outer* with *inner* change, compassion and understanding) gets suffocated with a runaway growth of negative connections. Now, the overblown and distorted ideas, symbols and actions for outer change overpower and distort everything else.

Finally, any theoretical discourse, even one like ours that is against the problem of 'getting stuck in theory' can get caught into its own trap! We might think, "Our critique of making theory as an anchor can only help in getting out of it". However is it that easy? It usually makes us more arrogant and more stuck in this whirlpool of *critical theory*. Society may benefit from any good work but, ironically, if the authors, however humble and

libertarian they are, cannot maintain anonymity, how they will remain untouched by the geyser of power that will erupt more the better the work is? How can they avoid getting commodified and entangled in up-climbing in this 'alternate market'?

Untangling the Confluence of the Streams of Hegemony, Egotism and Dependency – learning with Tiep-Hien

A sketch.

As compassion and understanding are the nourishment of the Spring, hegemony, 'egotism' and 'dependency' are few of the main patterns /toxins of the Desert. These will be seen as negative eco-systems of so many colours. Here, each nook and niche of the eco-system of Desert acts both in connecting, creating and being created by these. Similarly, we have the positive eco-system of the Spring (the ensemble of patterns / currents of anti-egotism, friendship and autonomy) that however is enmeshed with the negative.

[A note on our use of a few terms, metaphors and concepts.

Firstly, here we are not discussing *ego* or *egotism* in general. Our aim here is not to give one more theory or even to review the innumerable schools of theories of *ego*. Our concern is much narrower and rather practical, geared to our needs here. We are only considering some aspects of *egotism* that are useful for describing our problems.

An individual, group, or a social stream wants to *receive* / *have* compassion, respect, autonomy and empowerment, for themselves. When these needs are in harmony with those of respecting the similar needs in others, it is an expression of *positive ego*. However, the need to *receive* can grow without consideration for others, without a balancing growth of the urge to reciprocate, to give. (Footnote – 8, given in the end of Part – B) Such desires in a world with such inequality and scarcity can easily become a drive to acquire power and resource of others. This drive can be direct, indirect, or invisible. Like a chameleon, it can express itself in sanitized and 'acceptable' ways. Such drives get blown up, and can easily sweep us into the storms that keep raging all around, that create hierarchy, monopolize social resources and create deprivation for others. We are calling such drives as *negative ego* or *egotism*.

We are not seeing *egotism* as just some fixed (mental) character of the individual, i.e., like the shape of one's nose. We will describe it as a whole array of negative currents, connections and patterns that shape the *mind* (Footnote – 9, given in the end of Part – B) – at the level of individuals, relationships, clusters and beyond. Of course, all these (levels of mind) too shape the negative currents/connections/patterns.

For instance, can we consider the *egotism* of the exploiter without the system of exploitation? Can we consider the material, cultural /psychological over-dependency of the exploited without considering how this dependency is organized and created by the system?

Then, can we consider these connections/ patterns and flows of *egotism* as separate from categories such as *over-dependency*? It may be more appropriate to consider *egotism* and *dependency* as the poles or complimentary aspects of a *negative* eco-system.

Thus, can we consider *authoritarianism* – *egotism* in leaderships without the soil of *dependency* and *followerism*? In fact, we can describe in a similar way, the *negative* eco-system of *paternalism*. This is constituted by currents /patterns of *guardianism* and *followerism* forming our mind at the different levels of individual, relationships, clusters and communities. All these create the *pyramids*, the hierarchical traditions (of one main type) shaping our personality, relationships and communities.

Here, we are emphasizing upon the currents / patterns and also the individual. Thus, there is no fixed guardian or a follower. The patterns of *followerism* are flowing in the *guardian* and 's/he' acts as a *follower* to higher guardians. Similarly, the *follower* acts as the guardian to those below. Thereby, the currents/ patterns of *negative* ego get created, connected, and then manifested in these above processes. The *followerist*, having less space to build up autonomy and positive ego, inculcates individualism and paternalism, makes use of 'his/her' egocentric and authoritarian propensity when given a chance, and further enhances the similar flows, patterns and tradition.

Similar is the case with traditions that foster the intertwined mindset of superiority and inferiority. A central characteristic of oppressive systems is to create a hierarchy of valuing, i.e., the valorisation of wealth, honour and other characteristics of the rulers – right down to the colour of their skin. On the other end, the same value hierarchy, imbibed by the ruled (have not) creates a devaluation of humanity inside

'his/her' mind. This pushes the ruled into the rat-race and creates streams of arrogance and egotism, conformism and servility.

Egotism is mostly the body/pattern of our drives/desires –subtle, legitimised or gross – to possess and expand in those directions that are valorised (by Domination), without bothering about others. Such drives/desires can often be realized by maintaining dependent attachment to power lobbies, values and norms, as these enable us to gain in such possessions. Such drives sometimes manifest themselves as “just spontaneous” or also the desire to possess, create and expand, even in emancipatory directions, keeping the *self* at the centre (this could also be very subtle and invisible). Such drives constitute one basic foundation of power pyramids – building blocks/ bricks /cement, patterns of negative connection of our oppressive civilization. Such a pyramid internalised within an individual can also be understood as egotism. In clusters (the individual can also be seen as a cluster), and relational spaces, the pyramid rests on an authoritarian top and a servile bottom, each of which creates the other.

In this way of understanding, we see currents / patterns and connections of egotism, authoritarianism and servility, structures of Hierarchy and Domination, as different aspects /processes of the same eco-system of *Desert*. All these are in negative interbeing. Currents of altruism, anti-egotism, sensitivity and love constitute the positive side of this eco-system, the *Spring*. These are flowing, influencing and also are connected and created in each of the nooks and niches of our society and also in the level of individual psyche.]

Diverse currents / patterns of *egotism/authoritarianism/dependency* can also be looked upon as the *virus* and an epidemic. This causes currents, icons, concepts within the positive streams of social movements to acquire a malignant life of their own. These *viruses* infiltrating the icons can grow by manipulating and exploiting our very commitments towards social change. We keep worshipping these sick icons, giving them more and more power. Then, they become fetishes and Frankenstein, attacking the positive currents within ourselves and other sister streams.

Tiep Hien seem to say that *egotism/authoritarianism/dependency*, hegemony and hierarchy are interwoven like some poisonous seed, soil and tree. As the system of Domination is of so many different types (like so many species in *interbeing*) - capitalism, Statism, patriarchy, caste/racism, centralist Development, management/fitness-hierarchy and &c., so within the vast structured and informal terrain, their seeds and soil are of many different types too. We mean, though connected and interacting, these are different aspects of the same complex reality.

Despite all this, we also have an immensely rich heritage of innumerable counter-currents (mostly invisible and unrecorded) of mutual aid and empathy. These have always countered hegemony, *egotism/dependency* (at the level of the individual, relationships, larger clusters) since ancient times.

The first well-recorded rivers (of such insight and activism) can be traced back to the traditions rebelling against mediaeval States and associated religious establishments. They were flowing within the Shramanical, non-brahmanical traditions here in India; the anti-Establishment Buddhist, the Taoist, and many Zen streams in Asia; the Utopian socialist and rebel religious traditions in Europe. Since 20th century, Gandhian, bahujan / dravidian / rationalist / dalit, adivasi, and Marxist traditions in India have also emerged as significant streams against the power of *egotism/dependency* and hierarchy of different kinds. (Of course, all these are enmeshed in and too often also become sources of egotism.)

A similar deluge of such realizations was flowing in Europe since the 19th century with the arrival of anarchist, Marxist, socialist and other religion associated traditions of rebellions.

From that era, till today, rebel streams within anti-colonialism, anarchism, critical Marxism, psychoanalysis, existentialism, feminism, post-structuralism, cultural materialism and others, so many revolts and reflections of the people have continually created rich understandings of the processes of *egotism/dependency*, hegemony. These have been visible and mostly invisible. These streams of understanding have emerged from the conscious traditions and possibly more from the mostly hidden processes of our social mind, currents in informal terrain and collective un-conscious.

Thus, Marxism developed with a rich understanding of (the *first domain*) Domination of classiest (class hierarchy based) economic and political powers – the largest and most pervasive form of *egotism/dependency*, competition and war. It led to insights of how the *outer*, economic dimension, organizes a crucial aspect of our mind in each and every class. It exposed how this dimension enhances our *egotism*, particularly of the propertied classes, and *dependency* amongst the dispossessed. Marxism created the eye for understanding how *horizontal* processes of socialization get co-opted into vertical dimensions of political-economy. See for instance the omnipotent role of money in controlling society and individuals, as well as in the creation of fetishes of commodities and market in our relationships and mind. Marxists have seriously reflected upon how the exploiting classes legitimise their interest and culture in the name of "everybody", and "for the good of the whole society". In the name of *development*, capitalists legitimise competition, centralism, hierarchy and even large-scale destruction of non-capitalist cultures and Nature. All this furthers vertical distortions (*egotism/dependency*) within our minds.

Unfortunately, despite these insights, Marxism [Footnote – 10, given in the end of Part – B] (particularly before 1920's in Europe and till today in India) remained rather blind to the *second* and *third domain* – *egotism/dependency* of the proletarians, and also within themselves. Now the question that comes forth is that

if the ownership and scramble for private property/Capital creates egotism of the bourgeois, then what creates it amongst the have-not.

Further, moving to the third domain, we can ask, what can be causing the proclivities towards power within the *conscious* spaces of the socialist movements? How can this desire to *own and expand* play such havoc in all kinds of organizing against 'ownership (of property) and expansionism'? The Marxists could only see the *petty-bourgeois influence carrying the bourgeoisie vices within socialist party*, to explain all these omnipotent problems.

As they 'understood' everything and even the mind to be organised mainly by the mode of production, they ended up grossly under-emphasizing the non-economic aspects, which though were connected but also separate from the direct process of production. These were the world of the interpersonal, un-conscious, experiential and contemplative dimensions of the mind of individuals and groups. These dimensions were crucial to understand the oppressed, the space of their organizing and the mind of the *conscious* activist.

This above way of non-understanding, created a block in Marxist tradition. Ironically, the more they were successful in unveiling the political-economic dimension of psychology and culture, the more they got blinded to its other aspects. This then led to a new stream of egotism within Marxism.

Since the failure of all large Marxist parties and revolutions, *critical* Marxism (streams that got reflected in formal theory as Frankfurt School, combining psycho-analytic insights with marxism, Gramsci and others) has pondered seriously over the various dimensions of *egotism/dependency*. This began particularly since 1920s, moved by the failure of German and European Socialist movements, and degeneration of Russian revolution.

Let us see a contemporary presentation in the excellent review-book by Gottlieb – marxism, 1884-1990 *Origins, Betrayals, Rebirths*: [Note that he uses the term *ego* as we use *negative ego* or *egotism*.] We are giving our comments alongside Gottlieb's text in [third] brackets.

"By 'Ego' I mean the contemporary experience and practice of selfhood...structured by 'Individualism' and possession /Accomplishment. Individualism is a sense of self-identity based on competitiveness, exclusion of others, continual desire for self-enhancement and self-protection, hostility to difference, emotional over-dependence on a few relationships and difficulties in achieving intimacy ...dependent only on their own actions for self-fulfilment.

Individualism [this 'I' and 'We'] may apply literally to the particular person, or it may attach to the person's group [and also religion, nation, ethnicity...], gender, nuclear family [and political and social organisation and streams, even emancipatory], or close relationships."

"The ego ... is endemic to our age. It takes different forms in men and women, in different classes... and Ethnic groups [and streams of political and social organising, even radical]. But it is there I believe, in

virtually all of us; and it is, along with the oppressive structures of social relations, a source of profound unhappiness.

The Ego, constantly seeks external support to guarantee its sense of self-worth, a sense that can never be achieved because a sense of inadequacy is built into the ego from the start. Therefore, genuine happiness is always elusive. If I am not enough, or of enough worth, without possessing and accomplishing [prestige and power whether ethical or revolutionary], then anything I own or do can give me only the most temporary of pleasures. My attachment to having and doing will organise my life like an addiction. As an individual [or Organisation, or a stream], furthermore, it is extremely difficult for me to trust others [or other organisations] to help me [us] out of this dependency on doing and having. Others [if they are not my 'possessions'] are after all, essentially different from, opposed to, and in competition with me [us]. Because I feel myself as so essentially unconnected, so essentially separate, I must rely on myself [or 'my' Family or organisation if I possess/belong to them] alone. Conversely, because I place so much stock in what I can own and consume, produce and take credit for [my emancipatory activism, power and prestige], my sense of connection to others is attenuated. For if what I have and do must serve to overcome my fundamental sense of emptiness and alienation, then having and doing cannot connect me to others [who are not my cadres or colleagues in my enterprise] but only further my isolation from them."

'Egotism' in organised sectors of egalitarian organising

The oppressed must give prime priority to their organizing and rebelling. But if this process becomes blind to other varieties of oppression/suffering, then such exclusivist organizing becomes vulnerable and can be easily penetrated by egotism. This tradition of giving exclusive primacy to the goal of increasing 'our' 'revolutionary', 'accomplishment and possession' (as prestige and power of 'our' organisation) often becomes a pervasive mode of egotism.

Similarly, the other pillar of egotism, "Individualism", applies not only to the individual leader but also to *my group/community, or party, even my dream, my thesis*. Theory can get used for rationalising all these.

Are we saying that the urge to strengthen and give priority to the struggle against suffering and oppression; to create, accomplish and empower beautiful values and dreams, then to see such ideals grow; the urge to build one's individuality, the striving to overcome one's shortcomings; the urge to relate more collectively; the urge to be an activist is negative, a form of egotism? Certainly not! This urge is a vital positive current as such. *This*

is particularly so in the context of our paternalistic Asian culture that so suffocates our positive ego, makes us meek, docile and crippled. Hence, the urge to think and act independently and rebel within is more of a crucial positive stream here (in Asia).

However, in this part of the write-up we are examining how our positive libertarian desires – for instance to create and empower beautiful things – get entangled with and hijacked by currents of egotism/hegemony, and thereafter, how the desire to dominate and expand grow in a malignant way and take us towards oppressive possibilities.

Let us examine it further. The struggle at the level of self/group/social streams to overcome oppression, to do beautiful things, to transcend the *self*/negative desires /inability to take pain, the striving from being to becoming – all such revolutionary or spiritual or any other strong commitment comes via the strength of the positive ego. The same striving, when associated more with self-righteousness, egotism/ dependency, falls easily into the trap of narcissism and then competition (visible or invisible). This is legitimised by beautiful values. Hence, it then becomes problematic.

To believe oneself as superior, the ‘activist’ above ordinary people, opens us to the streams of egotism. However, ironically, considering oneself ‘ordinary’, humbler, better than ‘all those people (the activists)’ ... – can also become a fetish, another form of egotism and conformism. While struggling against one’s egotism that might be hiding somewhere in the activist zeal, one needs to link with and celebrate the streams of ordinariness that constitute so much of one’s self.

Nevertheless, to realize one’s ordinariness does not mean not to struggle against one’s negativity. It does not also mean not to work with one’s being and strive to become a better person. It means to climb down the ladder of arrogance, self-righteousness and supremacy, to strive to see one’s flaws and negativities. It means to tap into horizontal and ordinary positive streams that are everywhere. Here, from the standpoint of the *ordinary self*, one needs to begin one’s struggle to overcome one’s negativity (competitiveness, possessiveness...) while doing any beautiful act. Then this beautiful activism will become less vulnerable to corruption by success and power.

Ego is weaved in complexity all around. Here the enmeshment of positive and negative ego is almost invisible. This can be subtle to the extent of losing track of one’s emancipatory yearnings and values, when it is being hijacked by the negative ego. However, the strong positive ego and the powerful negative ego remain throughout in a constant conflict with each other. This conflict might not be visible but plays a crucial role all along.

This is also the process of creating Frankenstein. This is a typical vicious circle where negative currents associated with emancipatory icons connect and strengthen each other; gather in storms that then become bad idols, reified, like a fetish. In the beginning we, our horizontal connections and currents, create entities, devises and icons (like ‘Revolutionary’ or the ‘Moral’ authority, icon and organisation) to help and empower ourselves, our tradition of liberation. Then these entities begin to acquire a life of their own and start

empowering themselves by feeding on our powers in the grassroots. The larger these entities grow, the more they extract our resources, wasting us. Such entities can grow like a cancer – attacking and eating the positive roots that began it. [Footnote – 11, given in the end of Part – B] (*For instance – can ‘our analyses against egotism’ not become such reification, a fetish in itself? Can we not begin to believe, “As we have understood the problem of egotism, we are the best and we deserve the best?”*)

Other emancipatory traditions that created an understanding of different basic dimensions of egotism/dependency – its relation with Domination /Hierarchy /Hegemony during the last hundred and fifty years:

(Most of these traditions overlap with each other in many aspects of their understanding of egotism/dependency. We are not going into those details. We are just discussing few of their specificities.)

We described earlier how **Marxist and other socialist streams** have been in the forefront in exposing the construction of egotism/dependency by the economic and political powers of property ownership, market and class hierarchy, capitalism and imperialism;

Anarchist traditions have been in the forefront of exposing egotism/subordination as structures and tradition of pyramidal social institutions, and also as the seed and soil of Statism, organized religions, all kinds of authoritarian and hierarchical social organizations, unions and parties even revolutionary;

We also have the traditions of resistance of the people of the periphery, in colonial and post-colonial societies (and in the margins within the metropolitan *centres*). They expose the egotism/subordination created by the centralist development model of the imperialist States and their globalised politics, militarism, economics, ‘norms’, philosophy and culture, enmeshed deep within the rulers, the ruled and also the ‘opposition’ as the colonization of our minds. Gandhian, adivasi and related socialist traditions have been a little more successful in raising these issues and aspects of our dependency and arrogance.

Dalit/Adivasi/ lower caste /dravidian /rationalist streams expose the *egotism/subordination* organized by brahmanism (in India) and its varna /caste system (social hierarchy – which is similar to the white racism around the world).

Radical currents in Sufi/Bhakti/Buddhist and other subaltern streams were exposing the egotism/authoritarianism/hierarchy organised by dominational religions and States.

The anti-communal concerns and activism (in India) have exposed the egotism /dependency organized by the sectarian /neo-fascist /revivalist religious forces. They expose how patriarchal religions create this soil by organizing our personal space /life /support /security at its day to day, social, sexual and community levels; how historical perceptions, meaning, spirituality and identity is organized to legitimise this 'communalist ego'.

These also expose how the egotism /dependency created by consumerism /individualism and that by neo-fascist revivalism are paradoxically related. They are opposed in many levels but also create each other at other levels. Of course, such communalist ego/dependency was exposed and relentlessly struggled against by radical streams like Kabir and others in the Bhakti/Sufi traditions since medieval times.

Women's movement has exposed the *egotism/subordination* that constitute *masculinity/servility*; the politics of patriarchy and paternalism; the organisation of human sexuality – the suppressed and invisible women's sexuality and the over powerful male sexuality. It questions patriarchy /paternalism in the dimensions of the personal life, relationships, family, caste, community, Dominational religion, State and all social organizations, including even the emancipatory organising /party.

They have shown how patriarchy /paternalism are the oldest (from the time of *Man the Hunter*), possibly the deepest (social processes of *genderisation and genitalisation* starting right from birth, and controlling much of our intimate, personal and emotional life), and the most pervasive (the need for a good father/God) mode of internalisation of oppressive egotism /dependency /'norms'.

Psychoanalytical traditions, particularly their radical streams throw rich light on how egotism /conformism and hegemony manipulate, obscure and deny the existence /life of the individual. In understanding the individual's suffering, they have always (sometimes implicitly) questioned the suppressing power of the family unit and authoritarian society and its 'norms', particularly over children and adolescents; how it engineers our desires and sexuality into a regime of obedience and hegemony. They unravel how the creation of authoritarian /servile personality begins at childhood and act as the soil and seed of the authoritarian society. They explicate how a paternalistic culture denies the individual 'his/her' positive ego and how subsequently this enhances the negative ego.

They also expose the mechanisms of the sub-conscious, at the level of the individual, how egotism /dependency hides and manipulates us thereby. In fact, radical critical streams of the second domain, throwing light on the different layers and colours of egotism /dependency have extensively used these understandings from the psychoanalytic traditions.

More recently since 50s, radical psychoanalytical currents have established some serious links with Marxists understandings and also Buddhist realizations around these issues.

Radical philosophy movements in the West, from existentialism to post-structuralism expose the streams of egotism /dependency organized by the pathology of *knowledge/Power* systems (of the so-called *surfacing*

rational and normal society). They unravel common patterns of egotism /dependency that are inherent in the central faith of organized religions, “All reality and hence mind can be understood as the mysteries and *laws of God* — everything has a cause, is purposeful”. Thus these radical movements unravel similar arrogant patterns in science, “the laws of *objective truth*”. In respecting *subjective reality*, existentialism questions the arrogance that denies the *grey* and the individual’s subjectivity. These movements also questioned the notion of authority /centre and subsequent polarities.

We are realizing the construction of crucial streams of egotism /subordination /conformism through language; through discourse — particularly via centralist knowledge/power systems and transactions of the so-called normal society, democratic and welfare State (in its prisons, asylums, schools, hospitals, in its organization of human sexuality — through the role and construction of the categories of — ‘criminals’, ‘sub-normal’ and ‘abnormal’, ‘retarded’, ‘sick’, broken and meek, ‘male’, ‘female’, ‘perverts’ and queer — the *margins* of the ‘normal society’, the subsequent drummed up paranoia, confinement and protection); and even within revolutionary theories and spaces. The extensive, diffuse protest and initiatives for alternate living and counter-Dominational /cultural currents, particularly in Europe and US have exposed these in a mass level. This has inspired radical currents within *post-structuralism*, *subaltern* streams, *de-constructionist*, *post-modern* studies and other traditions.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi /trans-sexual) movements and *queer theory* have exposed the egotism, conformism and subordination that is constructed by the ‘legal’ and the so-called normal heterosexuality — the aura of the semen and the power of the patriarchal family, the power of possession, procreation and property.

A few radical currents further question the very discourse excessively centred around sexuality. These currents point out how genderised and genitalized sexuality is given such a central position, such power to construct negative ego /family, Dominational religion /market /desire that rules so much of our lives, whether through its denial or then its over-emphasis. They expose how our socialization (from personal lives to literature, market and the State) constructs the tradition of *genderisation* and *genitalisation* in our relationships, mind, society, and collective unconscious. Before we can freely explore the boundless possibilities of our ‘humanness’, we are alienated from our own being, manufactured to become ‘the man’ and ‘the woman’ or the ‘misfit’. The ‘misfits’ here are not even given a human dimension, neither he nor she — they are just *IT, a thing* (Footnote – 12, given in the end of Part – B). They expose how imposition of this binary totalitarianism on us negates significance of other dimensions (Footnote – 13, given in the end of Part – B) (e.g. social, economic, cultural, ethical, intellectual, emotional, physical and communitarian, eco-systemic) that are so necessary to build humane and holistic relationships and community.

Despite all these, the most pervasive streams /patterns of hierarchy /egotism /servility, those created by differentials of ‘merit’, ‘management’, ‘fitness’ and ‘able-ism’, remain mostly invisible today.

Negative currents such as competitiveness, smartness, ability of toughness, aggression and management; creativities that can be broadcasted (marketed) in a large scale (like leadership/intellectual/performance skills) are valued by Domination. Creating beautiful sensitivities, relationships and feelings, warmth, empathy, respect, nurture, nursing, resistance (in a small scale), oral and silent communication, quest for personal witnessing, introspection, expression and realizations – anything that cannot be marketed and sold, that cannot be used to go ‘up’ in the social hierarchy are considered worthless and ‘feminine’. They are not even considered as *creativities*!

These types and patterns of egotism / hierarchy / servility are deeply connected with the construction of ‘masculinity’ and ‘servility’ in our patriarchal / paternalistic set-up. Humans are constructed into ‘man’ and ‘woman’. The ‘man’ must have ‘smartness’, management ability, ‘strength’, such creativity that is valued in the social market, ‘virility and valour’. Women must be ‘feminine’ and fragile, surrendering to their masters or then be their imitators. Women will be valued if they can succeed/perform like men. As these are valorised, its corresponding negatives, ‘obedience’ and ‘servility’ are also constructed.

Such traditions of valuing and de-valuing, and what has been called a ‘merit’ / dignity /management /assertive ability and ‘fitness’ hierarchy are spread everywhere.

These are visible and structured, as in the systems of inequality based on class, State, meritocracy /caste /race/ethnicity, gender, *centre-periphery* relations. These create hierarchies in enmeshed ways.

Then there are widespread currents of conventional ‘valuing’ that are mostly diffused and invisible. They create merit / management hierarchies in interpersonal relationships in diverse spaces of family, friendships, work, community and so on. On one side, we look up to the media /market constructed ‘Super models’ in intellect or art, politics or spirituality, sports or body-beauty. The other side of the coin of such ‘star’ system is the ‘dustbin’ of society, the ‘failure’, unfits, the ‘subnormal’, the ‘abnormal’ and ‘disabled’. Like the ‘stick’ with the ‘carrot’, the normal Establishment uses these to scare and harass us, keeping us in line. Like toxic smog, it is present everywhere, in ‘Emancipatory’ spaces too. In our country this becomes starkly clear if we pose the question, “How have the streams of organized emancipation seen and responded towards the most powerless sections of the society, the ‘failures’, meek / non-assertive / scattered, mentally and physically impaired, ‘lepers’, homeless, prison people – ‘riffraff and criminals’, the old and so on. (See notes 1 and 2 in the end of *part B*, p.)

What really compounds the problem is, the person or groups who possess these ‘abilities’ are made ‘superior’ and placed on a higher level. The code of hegemony is after all, “You are what you have (as per the valuation made by the market and society – even radical,)”. A *political economy* and *political-philosophy* of ‘dignity’ / ‘worth’, status and meaning is thus created. This is a specific, insidious and crucial mode of “production, distribution and appropriation” of ‘dignity’, ‘definition, meaning’ and so much more. Classes and hierarchical inequality, exploitation and accumulation of ‘honour’ and ‘dignity’ are created and enmeshed within the hierarchies of money, power, gender, race/caste and other systems of Domination.

This over valuing and celebrating of certain merits has seeped so deep into our psyche that we do not even 'see' it. *It* (this system) has no name as yet. It influences our sub-conscious to the extent that we ourselves begin to believe in it and aspire to acquire all these merit-powers. At one level we keep struggling against it, when it is within the Establishment we are opposed to. Yet on so many other levels we ourselves become the victims of this hegemony. Humility and feeling for nurture are branded as 'unworthy' and insignificant, and even as 'timidity', 'femininity' and weakness. Values like, 'personality' (ability to influence others), management skills, intellect and militancy are seen as assets of the activists. Worshipping of such merit and the 'meritorious hero' creates pervasive and invisible hierarchy/egotism/dependency everywhere.

'MERIT/ MANAGEMENT/ ABILITY HIERARCHY' IS THE SOURCE OF A VAST BULK OF PROBLEMS INSIDE 'ORGANIZED' EGALITARIAN TRADITIONS

Such Hierarchy creates a mindset that sees *authorities* and certain abilities (prized conventionally) as being the key for our growth, even our activism and organization. Accepting such *merit hierarchy* legitimises the *appropriation and accumulation of honour and meaning* for our organization /activism /leadership. This devalues the *informal* sector and low-key/ordinary counter-Dominational activities. Thus, the *organized* sector keeps *using* (unconsciously exploiting) the *informal* sector. We too fall in this trap, this way of doing any 'good' work believing this to be the 'effective and practical' road to liberation. This becomes one of the deepest roots of hierarchy in the *organized sector*.

Today we talk about all sorts of problems of revolution, even the issues raised by the Gay/Lesbian movements. In fact, we might ask, why do we not know of or even talk about emancipatory traditions that raise the problem of merit/management hierarchy?

Domination 'allows' very few of us a little space for our intellectual and management skills to flourish, particularly amongst the exploited. In this deprived soil, hegemony constructs a special type of egotism in the 'meritorious few'. It seeps and hides into radical sensitivities. This happens often amongst intellectuals or activists who join the movement and have the ability to articulate new issues in written and oral discourse, and in action. Then, we as intellectuals/ activists often begin to believe that we ourselves are the masters of our intellect and action. "Are we not using our intellect/ability to theorize, write and act against the Establishment – even its manipulation via sub-conscious?" In the process, we lose the eye to see how hegemony in the shape of 'radical' market can even manipulate (dress-up) our own egotism and infiltrate our intellect/activism for emancipation.

Whatever be the reason, the political-economy (production, control and distribution) of *skills*, even the 'radical' ones, the unequal exchange of prestige and power remain ignored in our writings or activism. We have been theorizing about all kinds of egotism except this category. Moreover, if we are able to theorize, publish, influence, *even about the problems of merit hierarchy with some success* (for which the market is just beginning to pick-up in India), we can get saddled with glory and power. However, this can only be at the cost

of those who are meek, without any 'ambition', even emancipatory and at the bottom of this kind of hierarchy. **This is a most vexing catch-22.**

UNLIKE IN ASIA IN EUROPE/US WE SEE A DIFFERENT PICTURE

In fact, since the beginning of the 20th century in Europe, streams within anarchists, traditions of resistance of victims, within radical art and culture, all were opposing the fitness /normalcy /merit /management /intellect /ability based promotion and punishment, verticalism and market. 1950s and 1960s saw an outburst of social protest against all these. 'Perverts', 'freaks' and 'failures', 'mad' and 'criminals', hippies and bohemians — the currents of awareness and protest rose from all corners of the 'dustbins' of society. Large movements for *abolition of the prisons, abolition of asylums, abolition of schools*, for abolition of the hierarchy centred on education, fitness, ability were emerging since 60s from all type of victims, unemployed, coloured, homeless. Sensitive radical intellectual streams like post-structuralist and others reflected these concerns. (Footnote – 14, given in the end of Part – B)

In our society, such protests are almost absent, unconnected and invisible till today –55 years after *Independence*. Has it something to do with our long (above four thousand years) traditions of paternalistic soil and the later colonial /post-colonial era prevalent in Asia? On one side, the hysterical and State led hounding of the 'unfit' and 'different' has grown to a large extent mostly in the colonial era. On the other side, in our deeply paternalistic culture, the 'unfit' internalise deeply that they are 'lowly'. Their positive ego is crushed and mangled. They can mostly think of rising by clutching on to and seeking dependency upon some benevolent power/authority/father figure, by identifying with some winning team, by hiding in the security of conformism. (We will discuss this question later.)

THE ECO-SYSTEM OF ANTI-EGOTISM/AUTONOMOUS GROWTH

All these (above mentioned) streams expose and whittle down the various aspects of the patterns of egotism/dependency of Domination and its seeds and soil. In addition, their connections, particularly at the invisible level, help the positive eco-system of anti-egotism, empowerment and friendship from below to reduce the negative eco-system of Domination of *divide/co-opt/rule*. We can also say that there are extensive invisible streams that push back the negative eco-system, and that create a soil where all those visible positive currents and waves can keep emerging, connecting and flourishing.

We discussed it earlier (Section A; PERCEIVING THE ECO-SYSTEM OF CARING AND RESISTANCE, COMPASSION AND UNDERSTANDING; p. ---). There we mentioned that, particularly since 60s:

- How visible movements for peace, empowerment and connection from below have been emerging like rain in monsoon that comes, goes and comes again. Does it not indicate the heavy moisture and clouds, the hidden reservoir that keeps the visible movements flourishing and surfacing again and again?

- How such innumerable and different visible outbursts keep emerging, even in the most marginal and suppressed nooks and niches of the eco-system of oppression, which have no connection at the visible level.
- How official, mainstream authorities, norms and their morals keep losing their legitimacy. It is as if some invisible streams are eroding the stranglehold of the system over our mind.

However, it is not easy to see these positive processes. Of course, the problem is also with what we get to know and see. We hardly get a chance to see the mostly diffuse and invisible growth of linkage, awareness and resistance from below. For instance, in Russia, what we 'see' is the collapse of the party-State autocracy, and its replacement by the 'free market' mafia. The replacement of and infighting between the old autocracy and the new negative structures and traditions is so spectacular and the media and discourse is so engrossed with it that we fail to see the third group of streams – the currents of connection, awareness and resistance from below.

Streams of awareness / connectivity / democracy and people from below contribute much to liberate us from one type of authoritarian / coercive rule of the old classic type. However, it is a common experience that they do not enjoy the fruits of the victory. It seems that the positive streams keep whittling down the dependency on the old authoritarian set-ups but the growth of positive ego / awareness at the bottom usually lags behind. Negative connections / patterns come-up and fill the power vacuum much faster. Or we can say, new control systems come up that are broader. They co-opt the people below while giving more room to ego / awareness at the bottom. Domination thus builds new pyramids with broader base and subtler control. Thus, positive growth among the oppressed takes a long time to come up to build stable alternatives.

To give an example, during 40s in India, various categories of the oppressed played a main role in breaking the power of the British imperialism and feudalism. A power vacuum ensued. However, here the democratic space / awareness / power of the oppressed down below could not grow fast enough. A plethora of Indian mafias at every geo-political level of the party State and market proliferated, filled the power vacuum at the top, and took most of the fruits of victory.

Everywhere, we have the erosion of the legitimacy and power of the old classic streams of paternalistic authority / ego / dependency. In fact, this state of affair is also causing, at a visible level, frightening chaos, insecurity and emptiness. People are desperately trying to find security in consumerism, gurus, and fundamentalist / medieval / revivalist religions. Establishment declares such erosion of 'official' paternalism as just negative growth of indiscipline, disobedience, anarchy, individualism and so on. Undoubtedly one major reason for this erosion is the rise of negative tradition of consumerism, individualism, rise of commercial classes, economic and parliamentary mafias at all levels. But on the other side, ironically, the negative *consequences* of the reduction of old paternalism often enhance and lead to the growth of negative individualism and also surrenderism / fanaticism / guru worship.

In this view, whittling down of the official authorities, rise of individualism, consumerism, mafias and new dependencies, and the growth/connection of positive streams from below – all are related and enmeshed. These shape the organization of our ego, our psyche at all the levels of individual, relationship and community in complex but crucial ways.

THE CHARACTERISTIC OF EGOTISM THAT MAKES IT SO ELUSIVE IS ITS ABILITY TO ACT AS A 'TROJAN VIRUS'

Egotism can be so subtle that one doesn't even realize when it gets inside our pores. Like a chameleon, it can take the shape of any of our beautiful concerns. It can dress-up as 'compassion', 'revolutionary zeal' and even the drive for 'cultural revolution against egotism'. This *virus* easily uses our thoughts, our realisations as it's packaging. However insightful our understanding may grow, the virus can use it to update its looks and infiltrate our emancipatory life. Can we (who are writing so much about egotism) escape this infection? Such duping allows egotism to usurp our resource to further its purpose!

These realizations were present in earlier times too

We know very little about the streams of insight that were created by the struggles of Taoist, Buddhist, radical Buddhist and Shramanical traditions in medieval era against the institutionalised brahmanical, Buddhist and islamic religions, States and their hierarchies in Asia.

The rebels realized that one main weapon of the Establishment is to create *ideas (logic, spirituality, Truth and meaning)* to legitimise itself and organize subordination. They had a sophisticated understanding of egotism as drive for wealth and power-over-others (even intellectual power), which could be disguised in the form of meaningful *Ideas*. Ironically, the moment we identify with any view as *mine/ours* — egotism finds in it a window through which it can infiltrate. Making this identification and *view* as its home, egotism then works to expand and proliferate, justifying as to how this *view* is the best, the truth and must get most attention. The *attachment to Truth (Ideas)* can then become one of the most insidious modes of egotism/servility (the creation of the Guru and the committed disciple and mission). Thus, the war cry of the rebels was the triple Netis (within Buddhism)— (*there is no God', no Atman', and hence, no Truth.*

The later pro-Establishment schools of Buddhism and brahmanism co-opted these radical perspectives too. One of their main and subtle strategy was to emphasize on the 'struggle' against the *seeds* (egotism and attachment at personal level) to the extent that it gets split and even pitted against the struggle to overcome the *poison-trees and forest*, the system! Thus, this 'struggle for *inner* change' was so over-emphasised, in exclusion, that eventually it got split from the movement to overcome exploitation and subordination and the *outer* system of discrimination. Were not these *poison trees* a major cause of the *seeds* – egotism in inner life? Thus, anti-egotism based on religion became a vast multi-coloured tradition of struggle, meditation, sacrifice,

worship, surrender – against ‘egotism’/attachment, which was torn away from the resistance against the system of exploitation and hierarchy.

The anti-establishment Buddhists countered this with their concepts:

Oppose all authority; kill all Buddha;

Oppose both the trees and the seeds (Establishment outside and inside, its structures and roots, and also egotism in all forms and at each level). (see p.)

Many of the radical Buddhist traditions percolated into the Western emancipatory streams - like existentialist, radical psychoanalytic and post-structuralist...

Unfortunately, in Asia, the authoritarian Marxist tradition from Russian revolution (and then the Chinese) blocked a large section of the emancipatory tradition from learning from these radical Buddhist /Taoist /shramanical (sufi, bhakti, zen) and other subaltern streams.

YET A LONG WAY TO GO

Despite the existence of these streams, we can call the pre-60s (or even today, here in Asia) as the unfortunate era. At that time, sister libertarian streams that understood egotism/subordination of one type, were often ignorant of each other. Their egotism and anchors would block them from learning and cooperating with others. Each believed that their understanding of egotism was the best. This dragged them into one-sidedness and conflict. (Footnote: **14-A**)

Therefore, on the one hand in Tiep-Hien, there is an emphasis on the *multicoloured* realisation of how egotism/dependency of all types constitute each other in an integral negative *interbeing*. On the other, their perspective opens up a vast arena where the positive can exist – in effect where-from the *Spring* within the *Desert* emerges.

How do Tiep Hien engage with this omnipresent problem?

Tiep Hien grapple with this problem throughout their presentation, throughout their life. They offer a variety of methods like, *striving for detachment from all anchors; the fusion of the eco-system of compassion and understanding, and the process of unleashing it at all levels; Hien, acting – as both the result and source of compassion and understanding; combining the rebellion against Domination outside and inside, rebellion against its seeds, its soil - paternalism/authoritarianism... and so on.* It is a programme of deep fusion of *inner* change (cultural/spiritual rebellion in all the levels of our mind and relationships) with the *outer* change (rebellion against material and social structures). [See; Egalitarian Cultural (Spiritual) Rebellion I, p. ; And II, p.]

HERE WE COME BACK TO HIEN

Hien means, to personally (even standing outside any organisation), informally and directly, identify (experiencing and witnessing) and engage with suffering of all – of other's and also of our own (Footnote – 15, given in the end of Part – B), *here and now*.

Today we must ask why, when locked in an all-out struggle against such a devastating war (in '64 –'74), did the Tiep Hien order call for sensitivity, *ordinary* compassion and its immense variety, 'even' towards animals and plants?

Throughout our reflections we are discussing how Tiep Hien consider giving priority to the *informal* terrain, thereby connecting with the world of *ordinary* compassion and resistance as being crucial for the health of the *organised* activism. Understanding and valuing the *informal* terrain with action, Hien, improving the positive connection here, Tiep, is essential to build better relation between the organised and informal sectors.

Tiep Hien appeal to us to create an eye to feel oppression, power and erosion of sensitivity, at the micro, interpersonal and amorphous levels. To create such an eye, we need to actively engage with suffering in life around, *here and now*. It is basically the strength that one derives from this engagement that improves the vitality of our movement against specific hierarchical structures. They emphasise on the understanding that *even the smallest act of oppression, misery, insensitivity, deprivation of love is the virus of a major epidemic that spreads the Desert*.

Tiep Hien say, by ignoring this *epidemic* and concentrating on making *Revolution against the roots of suffering* (to capture power against the big Power) one might ironically create a structure with a new face but similar features.

This realisation would show a way to irrigate the *Spring*, to build up its immunity against the other epidemic of pollution of power.

OUR REFLECTION – B-6

Revisiting the Ends and Means Debate

The Paradigm Of The Classic Organised Sector

Old anti-colonial nationalists, socialists and Marxists, all had conceived Liberation as something one achieves in the *end*, after a *prolonged path of revolution*. They shared a common myth that the *means* like meritorious leadership, 'efficiency', and 'success' and holding on to powerful anchors, during the phase of revolution, are the key to achieve the good and ethical *end*. It was believed that "*Nothing succeeds like success*", and for such 'success', *whatever* was necessary must be done. "*Today is the time for sacrifice, using, disciplining and even suppressing ourselves and others in this all-out war for the future of compassion and happiness.*"

In accordance to this view, the *organised* sector was considered to be always 'higher' and superior than the *informal* terrain, 'ordinary' love, compassion and resistance. This puts the core hegemonic streams (like

valorising anchors, merit, efficiency, victory, management, aggression, hierarchical organising as in school or army, engineering of humans) in command. It was believed, *we are using the weapons of the enemy, only to defeat him – just a temporary compromise*. They did not realise that those *means* were but the seeds of Domination. Instead, to stand against those streams of hegemony would have been a significant step, leading them closer to liberation.

How our tiep hien engage with the problem

tiep hien see four kinds of positive interbeing:

Firstly, between different sections of the *organised*, and between the *organised* and the *informal* sector;

Secondly, between *witnessing/practicing* (directed both inward and outward) and *compassion and understanding*;

Thirdly, between engaging with suffering here and now, and the movement to abolish its roots outside (in the outer system) and also inside us;

Lastly, it is the *interbeing* between the journey, the means, and the end.

Various concepts that emerged in the anarchist, women's, anti-war, black, environmental ... movements in the 60's in the west were also the pillars of tiep hien!

All these movements since 60s opposed the belief that *Domination is just something 'out there' - some external enemy*. They believed that,

"It is also embedded as hegemony in our minds; and also in how we live, and in our relationships with people around. Hence, we must also struggle at these inner, personal levels; uphold compassion and understanding, here and now. This would tend to make our *final results* less contaminated by pollution of power or, as the women's movement said in 60s: *To say, End justifies Means, is the beginning of The End.*"

We in the anti-establishment marxist spaces in India started realising these concepts only around the 80s.

GANDHIANS DID EMPHASISE ON THIS OUTLOOK

Though Gandhiites did emphasise on this outlook (giving importance to using the ethical and correct *means*) but it was not a cure-all. They were weak in opposing the dimensions of economic and caste based exploitation outside, and authoritarianism (dressed-up as authenticity, dedication, respect for the leader and so on) inside the movement. Independence (1947) exposed these vulnerabilities. Thus, the Gandhian nationalist streams in the Congress party were no better in preventing the upper class and caste in taking over its leadership and the consequent rot. In fact, because it (Congress) was the largest anti-colonial party since the 30's, its co-option and rot was more spectacular and demoralising.

TIEP HIEN MADE SUCH A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE 1960s, IN AN INDUSTRIALLY BACKWARD AND PATERNALIST COUNTRY LIKE VIETNAM

They could see the crucial importance of the *informal* sector. Surprisingly, they could see this when colonialism, war, poverty, and extreme nationalism was so pervasive all around. Also, in that era the tradition /paradigm of the specific *organised sector* [organisations for national independence and the communist party that saw the struggle against the *enemy (imperialism) outside* as supreme] was so overwhelming. In such a situation, concentrating one's entire mind and resource, using any means, however cruel, to fight colonialism would have seemed justifiable. (Footnote – 16, given in the end of Part – B)

However, in such a time Tiep Hien were saying, *Compassion and Understanding* should not just be the starting point and final goal'. They saw this sort of stand as being similar to the ascetic streams of religion that offer a life of sacrifice and detachment now, for the sake of *moksha* later; and those of revolution that believe that, *end justifies the means*. Both are not realising the *interbeing* of *journey* and the *end*, with *journey as the end*. By *journey as the end* we mean that each small beautiful act, each positive moment of the *journey* is the seed that also enhances the egalitarian eco-system, the emancipation. *For Tiep-Hien, striving to maximise the three-way fusion of the whole eco-system of compassion, understanding and witnessing/practicing directed outwards and inwards, struggling against the currents of egotism/hegemony at every moment and aspect of life is as much the core of emancipation as is the struggle against outer Domination.*

However, if we take this position, things become grey and diffuse to an extent. Here, there is usually no clear-cut and simple path or singular solution to the problem of emancipation. In fact, we add another grave problem to it whenever we believe that there has to be one correct solution, one highway! In Tiep Hien's position, there are a number of principles that are often contradictory but in the emancipatory journey, each has to be respected! The violation of any one principle can lead to a crisis! It is thus a journey of perennial dilemma. Here, we can only discuss about what stance to take, learning from and looking at the innumerable different but valid ways of reducing compromises, balancing, improving our respect for principles of different types. In fact, in most situations, we do not have the scene of *one correct path* and (hence) *one authority understanding it and one organisation leading it*. Instead, there are innumerable overlapping paths, visible and invisible, all valid, each path being flawed, necessarily limited and one-sided in different ways, and different initiatives taking those paths. What is of real importance here is to see that the positive currents in all those differently valid paths clash less and cooperate more. This positive connection, *the positive eco-system of all paths, is the deepest middle path*. Such an orientation towards *middle path* is crucial for creating a better balance, a better way to nurture the *Spring*.

END OF APPENDIX (OUR REFLECTIONS) – B

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END NOTES

END NOTE – 1 (P.)

We give here two examples of how organized emancipation 'overlooks', or inherits the hegemonic and the 'normal' outlook regarding the situation of the 'unfit', few of the most oppressed sections of the hindmost.

A. In our cities, the homeless on the street are one of the most visible *hindmost*. These are people who are too unfit and weak even to 'posses' a plastic sheet disposable home (that one can put up in the filthiest parts of the city). Many amongst these homeless people are also mentally impaired,

"Discarded by families or wandering further and further away from home, their real selves (are) lost or submerged under layers of dirt and idiosyncrasies, handicaps both primary and secondary. They become non-persons, consciously ignored or worse paid unhealthy attention. Women are particularly prone to sexual abuse." (From a report of, *Banyan*, an NGO in Chennai)

Such mentally/physically impaired persons or those with leprosy and junked by society may be a minority amongst the homeless. But, whatever are their origins, they are all victims of massive trauma – of being rejected, made destitute, defeated and broken by the barbarism of the 'normal' society. The homeless are refugees of an invisible war that we do not have the eyes to see.

After the society expels/outcasts our weakest, the State keeps mangling them. British colonial rule created a series of perverse laws criminalizing the homeless. These dictated, in practical terms, "If you are not or cannot become fit enough to acquire a proper legal home / family /property /employment /boss, you will be labelled a criminal, persecuted and punished." This puts the street people under the absolute power of police and criminals. Whenever there is a crime in the locality, the police might catch a few homeless, claiming to have 'solved' the crime. The big criminals, paying 'police tax', under political protection, or under the protection of our 'normalcy', if they are upper class, need not be caught!

How did the streams of organized emancipation react to this 'adding insult to injury', the laws criminalizing the homeless, for such a substantial section of our *hindmost*? What about Gandhians and other socialists who stand for a society of compassion and justice, and often do such heroic caring for the sufferers? Such laws, monuments to our barbarism that began in our colonial past, could easily have been scrapped after independence. However, these laws remained, not so much because they were needed, but more because, strangely enough, as no one bothered, no one opposed them! Today these laws are on their way out. However, this is due to the pressure of the global ruling processes (like the World Bank), as such laws have been forced out in our master countries, by the struggles of homeless in those societies. Visible people's movement against these laws has been very feeble in our country.

B. Then, look at our prison people:

Firstly, we can ask, how our State punishes a poor for doing nothing but 'being present in suspicious circumstances', without 'proper orders', or stealing something worth a few rupees, when the rich routinely loot thousands of crores from our banks and public institutions, from funds for Development and Welfare, or even from famine/poverty/draught/flood relief funds? When corruption by the elites is the name of our government?

What role does our vast justice and prison system play, in such a society where the people in social and economic power are so brazenly and extensively criminalized?

The main role of the justice/prison system seems to hide this reality. It is rather to drive home the message to the poor and powerless, *“Don’t look at what the rich are doing. For you, there is the omnipotent law and order. Be meek, docile, dutiful and honest to the boss class, or you will be punished; and, you will be the sinner”*.

In fact, a large section of the prison people are usually not involved in any crime! They are the homeless, or poor and illiterate, nomads, dalits, adivasis or muslims. They are the people that the police /judiciary must put in prisons to legitimise themselves in this criminal society. To keep this vast police /prison system running, ‘prisoners’ are needed. Real criminals are difficult if not impossible to catch (they belong to classes much higher than the police) and can be caught only when there is a conflict within the powerful. Hence, it is the weakest who must be made the scapegoats. The police have to be nice with and keep secured the real rowdy people of the world!

The prison people are a disquieting section of the hindmost, a blot on our conscience. What has the tradition of emancipation done in the last hundred years in this regard?

What effect does these footpath people we meet daily, the prison people we all know of, has on the construction of our social sub-conscious? Does it not create deep layers of egotism of ‘fitness and normalcy’ and insecurity driven pathological dependency upon our ‘normal’ society?

END NOTE – 2 (P.)

In the *centralist development model*, the main ‘religion’ of establishment, a specific type of material organization and a value hierarchy based on egotism /subordination is created. Here, whosoever is higher in an arbitrary hierarchy of ‘productivity and efficiency’ along with ‘ownership and the power to control, management status’ has more power and recognition. It does not matter whether the so-called ‘production’ is meaningless or even toxic to life! Moreover, all people (of different values and cultures) at the periphery and margins of such a system are rendered valueless and worthless. They are constantly made to experience themselves as useless, burdens or ‘junk’.

Robbed of respect and meaning, material basis and security, they are easily rendered into ‘beggars’, ‘lumpen’, ‘refugees’ – the homeless. Such a ‘civilization’ is always eager to construct those whose interests and capacities do not suit the norms of the rat race, into ‘weak’ and ‘backward’, ‘failures’, ‘unfit’, ‘subnormal’, or ‘abnormal’ entities. In fact as the radical movements have been saying, *the need for creating these categories is more than the ‘side effect’ of the ‘development’ model*. It is the best way for the civilization to hide its own malignant ‘abnormality’.

The absurdity and irony of the system can also be seen in the situation of the ‘old’. In their case, more often than not, not just the society outside but also the children whom they had so lovingly brought up, turn down
surfacing

their social respect and power, once they find (at conscious or subconscious level) their old parents as no longer useful, productive or “constructively contributing” to life and its economic forces. Moreover, especially in our paternalistic and *ageist* culture, robbed of their colours, sexuality, warmth and individuality “these old creatures”, are turned into nothing but graves and ashes. Waiting for their death, with each sigh of guilt, they exist as a burden in their own homes, the very same homes that they themselves had so passionately created. Be it within the confines of a paternalistic set up or the culture that assumes to respect each individuality, the old are basically pushed into a corner, left to shrink and become more and more invisible. It is no wonder thus, that we rarely see them traversing across the vital cross roads of life. Instead, they are left to live in their own lonely and isolated corners, where an occasional visit by a grandchild may bring a transitory smile on their abandoned and forgotten faces. That they still cherish desires for relationships, for meeting their old sick friends, are perceived as inappropriate and ‘shocking’ by the young (“the productive ones”).

We might visit a friend’s house and forget to say hello to the old coughing body sitting in a corner of the room, with still eyes at the empty wall.

Their alienation, confirms their non-productivity – the wait for the ultimate – death. These ‘non-productive’ people are all around us; they may be with or without money or other forms of material security. Placed within their particular context (class, caste and gender) victimised and suffering in their own specific way, countless old men and women exist amidst us. We unabashedly render them into invisible spaces and forms. What is common to all of them is the experience of victimization inflicted upon them due to the non-reflexive stance of our ‘over pampered’ value system of productivity.

This God of ‘profit, expanding ownership and control, produce’ is so omnipresent that all societies be they capitalist, nationalist, socialist or communist worship it almost equally, with only minor variations.

Look at a recent situation in France:

‘France’s heat wave’ – The Hindu – Sept.2, 2003–By Vaiju Naravane

“Hundreds of bodies are lying unclaimed in morgues across France, especially in Paris. The dead are all victims of the recent heat wave that killed over 11,000 people. They lie there more than a fortnight after they died because their relatives are unwilling to interrupt their holidays in order to give granny, father, mother or aunt a decent burial. Unless claimed and buried by their relatives, these bodies end up in a common grave with the state paying for their disposal.

During a two-week heat wave from end July to mid-August, people died like flies. Most were old, weak and vulnerable. Many of them passed away in understaffed retirement homes where they had been dumped by families either incapable or unwilling to look after them. Hundreds died on stretcher trolleys in hospital corridors, quietly expiring before emergency staff could reach their side.

All that most of them needed was an intravenous drip of glucose and saline combined with lowering of body temperature....In a society obsessed by youth, beauty, success and power, ravaged by consumerism and greed, those who have become old, undesirable, weak or vulnerable are ruthlessly marginalized.

In a belated gesture, the French are planning a special fund for the elderly by cancelling a national holiday. The move has been challenged by people reluctant to give up any benefits. In the meantime the bodies are piling up.”

1. GUILT

Let us broadly discuss a beautiful value like guilt. The whole process of introspection – one’s fall, one’s realization that one is ordinary, weak and vulnerable; one’s confession to one’s own self as having aspects of distinctiveness with an egotistic and hegemonised subconscious as the other, carries the burden of guilt that may become an asset though painful. Nevertheless, the same journey of guilt can also get into the vicious cycle of self-centred indulgence.

This journey of guilt, where it takes one, is a mystery. It is so full of complexities that one never knows when it gets caught in a mesh and then gets connected to the streams of Domination leading to its own *fall*. It may then (visibly and invisibly) become an escape route to justify, tolerate, and become (or act like) Domination. There is a very thin line between when *guilt* (whether as a drive to outwardly directed action or self-reflection) is connected to counter-Domination and when it gets tied to Domination. Different shades of Domination have always harnessed, suppressed or drummed-up, exploited and negatively connected *guilt* for their convenience and legitimisation in their specific ways. This has ranged from the, “Be happy” streams within capitalism; to the “dig deep in your well of guilt and seek atonement by surrendering to the true God who forgives”; to the, “Feel guilty for being women who are always seductive”; to being pushed towards charity work; to various emotional catharsis, complacency or immunity. We will not go into their details. We are here discussing the *fall* of *guilt* even when it is situated within the streams of counter-Domination.

Thus, it is not a fixed entity or a positive or negative value in itself. It is guilt’s connection with the positive and negative currents in any given moment and circumstance that creates its role at that instance. We can similarly examine the category of *fall* (see, footnote, pp.), and ‘ordinariness’– in the end note (3).

Even when *guilt* is mostly playing a positive role, taking one towards the path of some progressive action oriented step like commitment, it might get hooked to an attachment with self-authenticity, self-righteousness, leading to the creation of anchors. The propensity of *guilt* is to get more enmeshed in self-justification and then further get enmeshed in exclusivist and totalitarian streams. This is not to question the revolutionary commitment or the *guilt* that one lives for having higher status or a hierarchy based psyche. This is just to understand the complexity that knits guilt into a mesh. The mesh with jumbled up knots. Hence, the whole process of introspection – untangling the strands and getting positively connected to *guilt* that gives one the strength to struggle against Domination becomes crucial.

As we look at *guilt* and try to understand it in depth, it seems that this emotion has always been part of us that keeps us going. Questioning our self-centeredness and the desire to *survive* at the cost of the other, guilt changes its shape but keeps subtly as well as harshly pricking us all through. Guilt is one of the primary critical abilities of our conscience.

Here we are not going into the deep journey of *guilt*. In fact there, in that journey, much of our existence becomes a *guilt*, “We are guilty of what we are; what we are not; where we are; where we want to be; what we say; what we do not say; what we inhale; what we think; what we dream; our spontaneity and so on. *We are, so we ought to chose; there is always a choice; we are guilty to take the choice; the choice*

too carries an inherent guilt along". Such a journey takes us into the stream of consciousness and jumbled up knots.

Similarly, consider a good value like *asserting* on the side of correctness and justice. In specific situations, believing oneself to be more correct than others or even strongly asserting over others is a necessary and positive act. Only when the same becomes a permanent feature, disrespecting the stands of others while holding on to a self-righteous attitude, then it falls into the shackles of egotism and Domination.

2. The invisible realm of counter-hegemony

We do not identify with those traditions of spirituality that believe in goodness and holiness having ultimate power all around. Nor do we believe that negative and positive all need to exist together and that is the law of Nature. We have for a long time been disturbed about this problem. We have been trying to understand and ponder upon how negative is hidden behind most of our positive and beautiful acts and thoughts. How each positive act or act that looks positive, where the will is the goodwill, gets manipulated and exploited by Domination/Hierarchy, egotism/hegemony. How we, despite the best of our intentions, become the victims of our vulnerable psyche, our self-interest (the creation of the negative culture that we keep inhaling all the time). When we believe we are doing something good for the other, how we in the process get our own self-interest and benefit out of it. How our ego dresses up our self-interest as the interest of the other. How behind most egalitarian acts lie the seeds of Domination.

But here in this write-up we are also trying to dig below this above understanding that we so believe in. We see here processes operating at the different levels of our self and society that are even more complex and strange. We are trying to see the above problem differently. Not denying that we are weak and easily succumb to Domination, we are trying to excavate into the space where people with a lot of negative in them do perform or struggle to perform certain human acts. These acts then somehow get connected with the streams of counter-Domination. We are trying to search the realm where positive currents though enmeshed with the negative, do have some autonomy. Each 'ordinary' person wants to be humanistic and meaningful but succumbs to the negative, gets co-opted, lost, yet resists. Here this resistance against Domination does get exploited but still exists in various shapes and tones. Here, in this space, hegemony is most powerful but also counter-hegemony is hidden behind hegemony, a positive current/culture that keeps creating resistance against Domination. This resistance could be visible or invisible. Here via such connections and currents, each person or a movement despite the *fall* still has a positive role to play in the struggle against Domination.

When we say that there exists counter-hegemony and positive eco-system even amongst the Desert – the system of Domination, we are not legitimising or justifying the being of capitalism, or any other Dominational or hierarchical structure. We do not mean that as humanistic and beautiful values can flourish within the negative structures, we do not need to overthrow the hierarchical monuments. In fact, it is the other way round. We stand against Domination and stand for its abolition at every

level – even its nuances. Counter-Domination and counter-hegemony for us is a strong source of strength that, all the time, despite tremendous attacks and enmeshments, still succeeds to a little extent in protecting us from completely getting seeped into the quick sands of commodification and Domination. We see counter-hegemony as an eco-system of resistance and compassion that despite being surrounded and controlled by Domination has survived over time and history. This counter eco-system, in a visible and mostly in an invisible way keeps striving for an emancipatory culture. We feel that in the struggle against Domination we must take in account and give due recognition to this counter eco-system that has mostly been marginalized within our radical movements.

3. One can begin to feel that one is a superior person as one knows and has encountered 'his/her' most negative sides. This then can give rise to a new kind of 'resistant' egotism that one had not thought of earlier.
4. In most Western philosophies, body and mind are categorically separate. In most Taoist/Buddhist traditions, body and its aspects are an essential and non-separable part of mind/society/Nature, inferior to none. So, in our subsequent discussion, by the term mind, we will include the mind of body as well. But we will not go into the crucial significance of this interbeing (of the mind-of-the-body with other levels of mind).
5. What is surprising is, despite all these extensive currents of co-option and reformism, immense currents of compassion, understanding and resistance (whether inside Government or NGOs, or in the vast open spaces outside) manage to retain their autonomy. What nourishes these vast traditions, this diffuse *Spring*?
6. For instance we need to see the stark difference between, when an insect or any being is helped in order to give respect to '*its*' life and when a Brahmin saves a cow as a tribute to his religion.
7. In the 60s, many anarchist/communist groups gave beautiful insights to how Marxism became an *ideology*, a frozen system that degenerated from Germany to Russia to Vietnam. They underlined the need, even for the anarchists, to avoid getting into such ideological boxes. They gave the concept of *revolutionary theory* to overcome the fossilization into *scientific ideology*. Groups like SI (Situationist International, 1957 – 72) went further to declare, "Theory must not be conceived to have any existence separate from practice and life of the exploited and oppressed." They had a clear understanding that when theory is separated from workers *living and life*, made into a fixed *thing*, it then becomes a *spectacle*, alienated from class struggle. These were beautiful insights that will live forever. *But, such insights could not prevent the group (SI) from getting into sectarian corners, fragmentation and death. (reference: demanding the impossible ...)*
8. Though in many situations and circumstances, for many people, it is difficult to be considerate for others and it does become important to receive and 'take more'. For them this need becomes necessary to survive (materially, socially, physically,

emotionally or mentally). In fact, in such situations, they not being given support and banished to isolated suffering would light up deep negative eco-systems. We are not writing the above to invalidate their existence or their need. In fact, at another level, their receiving of support, in its very process, can give meaning to the giver, as a gift from the one who receives. Such giving, receiving of support and meaning then can get connected to the positive streams.

9. Freudian tradition created the basic insights that could highlight 'ego' at the level of the individual. Other radical extensions offer models to describe processes like egotism at the level of relationships and clusters, discourse, society, its material/cultural/gender/caste/racial organisation, social unconscious and so on.
10. As we said in the beginning, by Marxism/Marxist we will usually mean the mainstream/official/State power involved ones.
11. Here, we are seeing *egotism/dependency* more as patterns of *negative* connections - a coming together, mutually enhancing feedback of *negative currents* (that can be associated with the positive currents). The more the negative currents get connected in the above manner, the more they get their *food* from conflicts and the more rapidly do they grow like some malignant virus. They grow *faster* as they grow *larger*, powered by their own growth and their sister streams.
12. Earlier, the patriarchal English referred to a person in general as *he*. Then with the feminist consciousness we started using *she* or *s/he*. But till today, we are in the process of developing a language which gives due recognition to all humans irrespective of their anatomy and genitals. So in our write-up, when we are using *he* or *she*, we use it under inverted commas – 'he/she'.
13. Here we can mention a problem that is more general. Though exclusively overvaluing one aspect of our identity is necessary in the context of oppression and rebellion, the same becomes problematic when it de-valorises other aspects of our multi-coloured self. , This then takes us towards alienation from our own being, opens us to many distortions. We become vulnerable to the egotism /dependency, power games of hegemony.
14. Look at the situation of the *disabled* in the First world. Here we will talk about the *disabled people's movement* there in Europe, which emerged since 70s and 80s, how they are reclaiming material, social and spiritual spaces denied to them by civilization. "The British Council of Disabled People has adopted the following definitions: Disability is the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a society, which takes little or no account of people who have impairments, and thus excludes them from mainstream activity. (Therefore, disability, like racism or sexism, is discrimination and social oppression). ... Disabled people are those people with impairments who are disabled by society." "a disabled person might say, therefore, "My impairment is the fact that I can't walk; my disability is the fact that the bus company only purchases inaccessible buses." Or,

“My impairment is the fact that I can’t speak; my disability is the fact that you won’t take the time and trouble to learn how to communicate with me.”

“The social model of disability has given us the language to describe our experiences of discrimination and prejudice and has been as liberating for disabled people as feminism has been for women. Liz Crow thus writes: Discovering this way of thinking about my experiences was the proverbial raft in stormy seas. It gave me an understanding of my life, shared with thousands, even millions, of other people around the world, and I clung to it. (it) has enabled me to confront, survive and even surmount countless situations of exclusion and discrimination. It has been my mainstay, as it has been for the wider Disabled people’s movement. It has played a central role in promoting Disabled people’s individual self-worth, collective identity and political organization.”

“While the British disabled people’s movement adopted the social model of disability about 15 years ago, it has taken us a long time to consistently use the word “disability” to mean oppression and to reclaim the word “impairment” as a value-free word to describe the characteristic of our bodies.

– HYPATIA, *Feminism and Disability*, Part I; vol.16, no. 4, Fall 2001; from, *Impairment and Disability: Constructing an Ethics of Care That Promotes Human Rights*; Jenny Morris

14-A. Howsoever radical and anti-establishment these streams may be, they can be caught into the traps of one-sidedness. Take for example streams like existentialism and psycho-analyses. Existentialism questions the arrogance of ‘objective truth’ and ‘purpose’ whether in rationalist theories or in religion; stands for valuing the subjective and momentary side of reality. Psycho-analyses goes deep into the psyche of the individual. Questioning the old paradigm where the individual was just a part of a community, it gives recognition to the individual as an entity. But, in the process of doing so whether existentialism or psycho-analyses can become a-historical and get into the paradigm of individual-centric world-view, weak in ethical engagement.

Here comes the need of complementing the above with other movements that emphasise more on connection, social commitment, interbeing — like Marxism, Gandhism, Buddhism...

Similarly movements and philosophies emphasising more upon such social commitment, interbeing or collectivity remain one-sided without incorporating the streams that stand for subjectivity and recognition of the individual.

15. Mainstream Buddhism emphasises upon the roots of suffering being within one’s own mind so much that the need to overcome the source of suffering outside, in the processes of exploitation/oppression, gets obscured. Moreover, in its compassionate mission, it emphasises upon engagement with the suffering of *others* so much that the need to identify with the victim and their struggle to overcome their suffering/oppression gets sidetracked. To our tiep hien, taking side of the victim is primary. Hence, taking the standpoint of the victim, engagement with the suffering of others, and also one’s own, is crucial. See how they, as victims, stood with the victimised people of Vietnam against imperialism and its war.

16. In fact at that time, the mainstream of Buddhist order plotted with nationalist Buddhist military generals to forcibly capture power in Vietnam, pushing out the generals who had become total lackeys of US. This *coup* ended in a massacre, with the pro US lobby stronger than ever.

ORIGINAL TEXT - PART – C

THE CHARTER - FOUNDATION PRINCIPLES, TWO PROMISES FOR CHILDREN

According to the Charter of the Tiep Hien Order, “the aim of Tiep Hien is to study, experiment and apply Buddhism in an intelligent and effective way to modern life, both individual and societal.” Experiment as used in the Charter denotes application of Buddhist principles and methods to one’s own life in order to have direct and personal understanding of them. This type of understanding differs from an understanding derived from theoretical study that primarily relies on the intellect. It is only through this direct experimentation that one can know whether these principles and methods are appropriate and effective. The Kalama Sutra advises neither to believe nor act without the spirit of experimentation. The results of our practice should be tangible and verifiable. Methods and practices that do not nourish and develop Compassion and Understanding should not be considered as truly Buddhist.

The Charter lists four principles as the foundation of the Order; **non-attachment to views, direct practice-realisation, appropriateness and skilful means**. Let us examine each of these principles.

Non-attachment to views: To be attached means to be caught in dogmas prejudices bad habits and what we consider Truth. The Sanskrit word for attachment is upadana or graha. The first aim of our practice is to get rid of attachment, especially attachment to views. This is the most important teaching of Buddhism. The first Tiep Hien precept addresses this issue.

Reference OUR REFLECTION - C-1

Tiep Hien & detachment P.

Direct practice-realisation: In Buddhism, the direct experience of reality, not speculative philosophy, is stressed. It is direct practice- realisation, not intellectual research that brings about insight. Our own life is the instrument by which we experiment with truth. When we drink a cup of orange juice, we know it is orange juice without the need to reason or speculate. This type of knowledge is called direct realisation.

Appropriateness: If a teaching is not in accord with the needs of the people and the realities of society, it is not truly Buddhist. In order for Buddhist teaching to bring about Compassion and Understanding, it must be appropriate. On the one hand, the teaching must conform to the basic tenets of Buddhism. On the other hand, it must truly help people. It is said that there are 84,000 Dharma doors to enter Buddhism. In order for Buddhism to continue as a living source of wisdom and peace, even more doors should be opened.

Skilful means: Skilful means (upaya) consist of images and methods created by intelligent teachers to show the Buddha’s way and guide people in their efforts to

practice Buddhism in special circumstances. These means are called dhamma doors.

Concerning the above four principles, the Charter says,

“The spirit of non-attachment to views and the spirit of direct practice-realisation bring about tolerance and compassion in our way of looking at and interacting with living beings. The spirit of appropriateness and the spirit of skilful means bring about the power of creativity and the ability to reconcile. Both are necessary in order to realise the vow of helping in the world.”

Guided by these principles, the Tiep Hien Order adopts an open attitude towards all Buddhist schools:

“The Tiep Hien Order does not consider any sutra or any group of sutras as its basic text. Inspiration is drawn from the essence of the Buddhadharma as found in all sutras. The Order does not recognise any systematic arrangement of the Buddhist teaching as proposed by various schools of Buddhism. The Order seeks to realise the Dharma spirit within primitive Buddhism as well as the development of that spirit throughout the Sangha’s history”.

In addition, the Charter expresses a willingness to be open and to progress;

“The Order is open to all forms of activity that can revive the true spirit of Compassion and Understanding in life. It considers the true spirit of Buddhism more important than any Buddhist institution or tradition. Inspired by the bodhisattva ideal, the members of the Order of Interbeing seek to transform themselves in order to help change society in the direction of increased understanding and more compassion.”

Reference OUR REFLECTION - C-2-

‘Tiep’ is -

to strive against the placing of some kind of vertical’ spirituality above all horizontal’ ones P.

ABOUT THE ORDER

The Order of Interbeing consists of two communities, the core community, and the extended community. The core community consists of those members who have taken the vows to observe the fourteen precepts of the Order. The extended community consists of members who attempt to live up to the Tiep Hien spirit but have not taken the vows. Members of the core community are called Brother or Sisters of the Order of Interbeing and should be at least twenty-two years of age. Members of the extended community co-operate closely with the core community members in all activities. They also participate in the recitation of the fourteen precepts. In order to become a member of the core community, one should usually undergo a one-year apprenticeship, practising with members of the

core community. After ordination, one should observe sixty days of retreat and intensive practice yearly.

ABOUT THE PRECEPTS

As previously mentioned, the Tiep Hien precepts are not a set of rules, but guides for each moment of our daily life. Most religious rules or prohibitions begin with the control of bodily actions. Thus, the traditional commandments not to kill, not to steal, etc. The Tiep Hien precepts begin with the mind, and the first seven precept dwell with problems associated with it. This is not at variance with Buddhism. "The mind is the King of all Dharmas" say the sutras. "The mind is the painter who paints everything." The Tiep Hien precepts are very close to the Eightfold Path, the basic teaching of both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.

The Eightfold Path can be described as the precept-in-essence (Pali: pakati-sila), while the more traditional precepts are only the established precepts (Pali: panatti-sila). The Eightfold Path also begins with the mind - right view and right thought.

It may be helpful to arrange the fourteen Tiep Hien precepts into three categories. The first seven deal with the mind, the next two with speech, and the last five with the body. However, this division is arbitrary. Throughout the fourteen precepts, the mind is always present like a lamp of consciousness. Those who regularly recite the precepts of the Order of Interbeing will naturally see this.

DESCRIBING THE CEREMONY

The Tiep Hien precepts are recited at least once every two weeks. Usually, a member of the core community is asked to lead the recitation. However, members of the extended community can also be invited to lead. The best time for reciting the precepts is early morning; six to seven a.m. Tea can be served before the recitation, but not breakfast. Each person should have a copy of the precepts. Participants sit in two rows facing each other, with a copy of the Precepts in front of each person. All copies should be of the same edition, so when the leader turns the page, everyone will turn theirs at the same time. This is to avoid disturbances caused by the noise of rustling papers.

The person who sits at the beginning of the row on the right, nearest the shrine, is called "head of the ceremony." He or she attends the bell. The person who sits in front of him is called "the one who pleases the community." She takes care of the wooden drum, and regulates the chanting and the recitation. The recitation should be neither too slow nor too quick, as the right speed will make the community happy. She should also be visible to everyone, since she is the leader of the recitation. All participants should have a sitting cushion. In addition, the hall in which the recitation takes place should be well lighted so that everyone will be able to follow the recitation on his or her own copy.

At the commencement of the recitation, the ceremony head offers incense and reads aloud the incense offering gatha. The rest of the community stands behind her in several rows and, with palms joined follow their breathing. After the incense offering, the ceremony head invokes the names of Sakyamuni, Manjusri, Amantabhadra, and Avalokitesvara. After each is invoked, everyone makes a bow. Then the members of the community divide themselves into two facing rows and sit down. Once everyone is settled, the bell and drum are sounded and the recitation begins with the sutra-opening gatha. From the very beginning of the ceremony and recitation, everyone follows his or her breathing and practices mindfulness with every movement - joining palms, walking, sitting down, and adjusting posture. There is an appropriate gatha for each of these.

Of course, during the recitation one should concentrate on the precept being recited. The ear follows the sounds, while the eyes follow the printed lines. Thus, hearing and seeing co-operate with the mind to receive and examine the content of each precept. The concentration obtained will keep distracting thoughts from invading the mind. The community pleaser should speak in a clear voice that communicates the spirit of the precept. The community's successful concentration depends greatly upon her.

When the community pleaser asks, "Brothers and Sisters, are you ready?" each person can silently answer in his or her own mind, "yes." After reciting each precept the community pleaser should pause for a moment - three breaths, in and out - before asking the question, "This is the precept of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied and observed it during the past week?" This pause allows everyone to dwell on the content of the precept. The best way to obtain concentration on the precept's content is to silently reread the precept. This time the mind should dwell more on the essence of the precept than the words. Usually, the answer to the posed question will fall somewhere between the extremes of yes or no. Everyone who regularly practices mindfulness and observes the Precepts is entitled to say, "yes." It would be wrong to say, "no." Yet, our "yes" may not be firm or positive, because during the past week efforts have been made, but "not enough." So our answer may be something like "Yes, but it could have been better if ... I promise to do better." One should allow the question to go deep into one's mind and heart. Sometimes one is unable to provide a silent answer. The question will have considerable effect if we allow it to act during the silence of the three breaths. While allowing the question to enter during this period, one should follow one's breath. The ceremony head should deeply observe three breaths before inviting the bell to sound. The community pleaser should be aware of the community's questioning. When the bell is sounded, everyone joins his or her palms and the community pleaser is ready to proceed to the next precept. During the time of the breathings, no one should touch the corner of his page or get ready to turn the page, until the bell is sounded. This will create a calm, quiet atmosphere.

*Reference OUR REFLECTION - C-3 – **Describing the Ceremony P.***

THREE REFUGES AND TWO PROMISES: RECITATION FOR CHILDREN

Today the community has gathered to recite the Three Refuges, the Two Promises, and the Precepts of the Order of Interbeing. First we will recite the Three Refuges and the Two Promises. Will the younger members of the community please come forward?

Young people, upon hearing the sound of the bell, please bow three times to show your gratitude to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. (Bell)

Young students of the Buddha, you have taken refuge in the Buddha, the one who shows you the way in this life; in the Dharma, the way of understanding and love; and in the Sangha, the community that lives in harmony and awareness. It is beneficial to regularly recite the Three Refuges. Will the entire community please join with the young people in repeating after me:

I take refuge in the Buddha, the one who shows me the way in this life

I take refuge in the Dharma, the way of understanding and love.

I take refuge in the Sangha, the community that lives in harmony and awareness.

Young students of the Buddha, we have completed the recitation of the Three Refuges.

Reference OUR REFLECTION - C-4 – <u>Three Refuges in Engaged Buddhism P.</u>

Now we will recite the **Two Promises** that you have made with the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Will the entire community please join the young people in repeating after me:

I vow to develop my compassion

In order to love and protect life

The lives of people, of animals and of plants.

This is the first promise you have made with the Buddha, our teacher. Have you tried to learn more about it and to keep your promise during the past two weeks? (Bell)

I vow to develop understanding

In order to be able to love and to live in harmony

With people, animals and plants.

This is the second promise you have made with the Buddha, our teacher. Have you tried to learn more about it and to keep your promise during the past two weeks?

Young students of the Enlightened One, understanding and love are the two most important teachings of the Buddha.

If we do not try to be open, to understand the Suffering of other people, we will not be able to love them and to live in harmony with them. We should also try to understand and protect the lives of animals and plants and live in harmony with

them. If we cannot understand, we cannot love. The Buddha teaches us to look at living beings with the eyes of love and understanding.

Please learn to practice this teaching.

Reference OUR REFLECTION - C-5 –

ON THE TWO PROMISES FOR CHILDREN –

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPASSION AND UNDERSTANDING - P.

Young people, upon hearing the sound of the bell, please bow three times to the Three Jewels and then you can leave the Meditation Hall.

(Bell)

END OF ORIGINAL TEXT - PART- C

APPENDIX (OUR REFLECTIONS) –C

THE CHARTER – FOUNDATION PRINCIPLE; TWO PROMISES FOR CHILDREN

REFERENCE OUR REFLECTION - C-1

Tiep Hien & *detachment*

Contemporary Dominations have unleashed an unprecedented storm of make believes (*spectacles*), greed, exploitation, violence, famine, wars, epidemics – medical or spiritual, mindless conformism, alienation, insecurity and fanaticism, genocide and ecocide of non-human societies – a corrosive and malignant poison gas of power. This toxic deluge is beautifully dressed up as in a drama. It tries to hide, appropriate and corrupt all that is real and beautiful. The humanity in us is in torment. People are suffering as never before, getting more disintegrated and broken. Many a time in such despair, people get attracted towards Dominational religion or some philosophy – offering meaning, security and quick personal salvation.

Most philosophical perspectives, including many Buddhist streams, propagate the ideal of *detachment*. They say, “Detach yourself from suffering by trying to rise above emotional hassles of attachments around; by embracing the *True Path* and thereby create inner change and peace”. Many of these traditions (of Dominational religions) also build big establishments of *compassion*, their kind of *understanding and charity*. It becomes a type of *State*, to organize our spiritual and moral health, and also to give ‘meaning’ to our existence.

Here, we are discussing the problem inherent in the concept of detachment. This might be within the mainstream traditions of religion. This might be within its radical fringes or streams like Gandhian that are deeply committed against oppression/suffering and are struggling for empowerment of the people. In order to improve their social commitment, to make more personal sacrifice, even to fight egotism, most of these (radical) streams use the concept of *detachment*, often derived from the mainstream religion. The problem we are mentioning here afflict a large class of similar streams.

In these streams we are taught to strive to be ‘superior’ people, unaffected by ‘ordinary’ emotions and sufferings of life. We are shown a path to love ‘everybody’ by the exclusion of diversions and disturbances due to *personal* feelings, relationships and even the sufferings of our close ones. We are also taught to love ‘everyone’ but not get emotionally hassled by the concerned person’s suffering. This does lead us towards detachment from suffering and the ‘ordinary’, but in the process we keep getting more and more attached to our stances and negative ego (the egotism of the spiritual achiever). This kind of *detachment, peace and inner change* blocks much of our personal and social sensitivity.

This also leads to another block. In our pursuit of *detachment*, we fail to realise how our attachment and love for some specific beings and identification with their suffering has always inculcated in us a deep sense of connectedness and respect for life at every nook and niche of it’s eco-system. In idealising *detachment*, we

become blind to crucial parts of our personal journey. We then tend to look down upon many critical lessons of love and togetherness that we had ourselves arrived at through our engaged and attached emotional strivings.

This kind of *detachment* also blinds us to social processes that create much of our suffering. Our spiritually 'superior' stance blocks us from identifying and seeing from the point of view of the victims. We become less mindful of suffering around us. We strive more towards some concept of *Truth* and *inner peace*, charity and service that blocks our mind even more.

Gottlieb (in his book, *Spirituality and Resistance*) has beautifully expressed our feelings:

"Yet I get apprehensive when they (Dominant spirituality) are interpreted as suggesting that we might achieve equanimity at the cost of forgetting, even for a moment, just how much pain there is. For me a spiritual view will be authentic only if it can celebrate its peacefulness not only despite personal disappointment, but also as it faces the full range of the world's moral horrors."

(P.141, bracketed term is ours).

We understand *compassion* for our tiep hien to be the similar to what is expressed by Gottlieb:

"Humanity is outraged in me and with me. We must not dissimulate nor forget this indignation, which is one of the most passionate forms of love". (p. 137)

Even by *peace* tiep hien mean learning the inner calm, but of being in the eye of the cyclone. This is learning how not to get broken but flow with the storms of pain that we must nevertheless enter into.

TIEP HIEN OPPOSE THE CONCEPT OF CORRECT PATH AS *DETACHMENT FROM SUFFERING IN THE REAL WORLD*

Instead, they appeal to go deep into this *Desert* of suffering. They call for opposing Domination that organises suffering to make profits, out of humans and other beings as well.

One vital core of Tiep Hien's concept of *detachment* is becoming conscious of attachment with all type of anchors, with preconceived ideas – notions of the so-called authority, truth and correct path, whether spiritual or materialist and emancipatory, and possessiveness towards them. They believe that such attachments can create a block within us, preventing us from opening-up to different types of suffering, understanding and action. Thus, they also go further to say that if this above consciousness of attachment becomes an anchor in itself, then such a striving needs to be questioned and understood.

For Tiep Hien, their kind of detachment, along with Hien - building up a *rebel* compassionate and autonomous witnessing, sharing, caring and practicing, *here and now* and positive ego is the core of the struggle against *egotism*.

Domination and its paternalism train most people (from childhood) to avoid pain and insecurity by seeking protection by clutching on to anchors. Most streams of the organised sector believe, "Not providing some anchor to those people in difficult situations will open them to deep uncertainty and insecurity, confusions, fear,

make them guilty and paralysed. They then will clutch on to the anchors provided by the Domination. So we have to provide them with some alternate and radical anchors.”

Though paternalistic, there is a lot of truth in this understanding. So, Tiep Hien do not reject the organised sector of emancipation. *They uphold the principle that different kinds of people need different types of emancipatory initiatives, organising, icons, faith and roads to flourish.* Particularly in Asia, large numbers of people need traditions shaped as paternalism to build up struggles, self-respect, material and social space to develop their positive ego. Tiep Hien thus can see innumerable and crucial positive streams in the mostly paternalistic *organised* sector that must be connected with.

But there is the other side too. These alternate and radical anchors, paternalist organising, will also create/connect negative currents/patterns. How to tackle these seeds of Domination?

So Tiep Hien say, *“We have also to stand against our negative conditioning of childhood; we must accept that there is no Buddha, no Highway. We must learn to look at and question our anchors. We must learn to grope in the dark, take support from each other, and patch together so many paths – trails and tracks – however ramshackle these may look to be. In this way we can learn to open our inner space to collect the nourishment from the innumerable streams of compassion and resistance that create the Spring. In this way, the positive currents/patterns within different authoritarian and one-sided streams can enrich each other and grow.”*

OUR REFLECTION - C-2

'Tiep' is to rebel against and reclaim all kinds of 'vertical' spirituality for mutual enrichment within the world of emancipation

[This is also connected to our REFLECTION – B-3, p.]

INTRODUCTION TO OUR SECTIONS – CULTURAL (SPIRITUAL) REBELLION – I (P. XX), II (P. XX), AND III (P. XX)

Emancipatory streams rebel against both, the material and cultural exploitation. One stream might emphasise one or the other, and be one-sided. Nevertheless, rebellion against one aspect (material or cultural) is also rebellion against the other. These rebellions are in positive interbeing. Thus, rebellion against material exploitation is cultural/spiritual rebellion, and vice versa.

Streams of cultural rebellion can be:

Faith based: those that are associated with icons like God, some cosmic energy or some Messiah; and

Non-believing; like scientific socialist, anarchist... that do not have icons like God, but are ideology/theory-centric.

Then, there are streams like our tiep hien that are critical and understanding towards icon and ideology-centrism of both the faith based ones and non-believers. Moreover, there are rebellions of the victims that are around specific oppressions (like that of people as workers, women, dalits, peasants...) and issue based. These are always mixed. Then we have the vast *informal* terrain that cannot be classified so simply. However in this writing we are trying to understand the positive currents /patterns *wherever they may be*, within any type of rebellion against the cultural and psychic exploitation.

A GLIMPSE OF CULTURAL REBELLIONS BASED ON FAITH

From early times the rebel streams associated with Faith showed a good understanding of the spiritual/social engineering organised by Domination. Streams as diverse as sufi / bhakti, rebel Christian, Buddhist and then zen had developed a rich heritage of re-interpreting and re-claiming spirituality and its icons from Domination.

Since 50's there has been significant and widespread resurgence in these streams. Insights from a galaxy of other egalitarian streams have mingled with the earlier ones. Thus listen to (late) Father Kappen, a pioneer of the radical Christian socialist stream in India since the 1960s:

His (historical, re-claimed Jesus) word and deed answer the profound aspiration of the downtrodden masses ... His forerunners are ... but the dissenters and protesters from the Buddha onwards. His blood must mingle with the blood of the sudra, the outcaste, the tribal and dissenters of today. ...

This is to be a rebellion in (culture):

Values, norms, and ideas prevalent in society, by means of which people perceive, interpret and evaluate themselves – and their being-in-the-world... "It can release the subterranean energies locked up in the collective sub-conscious ... (and have) the power to knit humans into a community being the common ground on which individuals ... meet".

Thus cultural rebellion can be: the Asian tradition of dissent first voiced by Buddha, later taken over by the social radicals of the medieval Bhakti movement, and finally re-echoing in the messianic movements of the lower castes, outcastes, and tribals in the colonial and the post-colonial times. Any future cultural movement will have to maintain continuity with this tradition of contestation.

Our description of this whole field of cultural resistance will be similar to the one dealing with *egotism/dependence* (see, p. –**Reflection – B-5: HIEN — Making A Change In Real Life, Here And**

Now, – Untangling the Confluence of the Streams of Hegemony, ‘Egotism and Dependency’ – learning with Tiep-Hien: A sketch)

That is, we will describe the Establishment of oppression like capitalism, casteism, genderism, ... and then, the diffuse, informal, invisible terrain. Each of these is associated with a specific cultural-spiritual dimension that legitimises and valorises oppressive norms of that system – in society and in our mind, relationship, cluster, and community. On the other side, there are streams of resistance that expose these and strengthen the counter-Domination tradition of that type. These try to reclaim the specific type of ethics, culture/spirituality and streams/patterns of relationships, for emancipation.

We will discuss the cultural aspect of the eco-system of oppression and that of resistance at two levels – the *specific* bodies (aspects), and the *common* threads.

Specific bodies:

Thus, the socialist and Marxist streams of resistance expose the specific (cultural) body of Hierarchy and Domination based on the ownership (by few) of the means of production/property/money, the cultural/spiritual/psychological dimension of economy, the legitimisation and valorisation of such ownership/control. If propertied class is ambitious, competitive and white, then ambition, competitiveness is ‘good’ and white is ‘beautiful’. The anti-globalisation resistance exposes the value hierarchy organized by global capital that is similar to colonialism, US is the ‘paradise’. Similarly, dalit resistance expose a different dimension of Domination – the body of social hierarchy created by *Varna* system (casteism) organized by brahmanism. Anti-communal streams expose the problem of organization of identity, personal and community life by centralist/organized religion, its link with State politics and the rise of the national chauvinistic/communalist/fundamentalist movements. Women’s liberation exposes the dimension of genderisation and patriarchy. Anarchism exposes the body of the culture/value system of hierarchy based on centralism of political power of the State and any other social organizations, even emancipatory.

These are some of the *specific* (though connected and interacting) *bodies* of cultural oppression and rebellion. They are the terrain of concern of our *first and second domain*. They overlap with the concerns of the *third domain* – the problems of sickness and health of the streams of cultural rebellion. The *specific* bodies of cultural oppression create, enhance and also clash with each other. Alongside, the corresponding streams of resistance also relate in a complexed way. For instance, the Marxist streams easily light up the rot due to money/class hierarchy inside the spaces of dalit, women, and also their resistance. Dalit and women reveal how caste and gender hierarchies can legitimise themselves within workers and their struggles, even with Marxist rhetoric!

Common threads:

On the other side, we can see many common threads running through the different specific dimensions of cultural exploitation – whether capitalist, imperialist, Statist, casteist, genderist or communalist and so on. These *common threads* legitimise Hierarchy and Domination, competition and expansionism with what they define to be ‘good work’. Such ‘definition’ and ‘meanings’ can vary widely, and even can clash. Thus,
surfacing

capitalists will define 'good work' as *industrial-urban-development*, brahmanism and paternalism will define it as *moral, spiritual and natural development...*

Few radical fringes in each stream of resistance, emphasize upon the rot that enters every movement whenever it gets entangled with Establishment, its rules of the game, its centralist power politics of institutions, commerce, election and government. These fringes may be associated with cultural, materialist, Marxist, dalit, adivasi, feminist, anti-communalist, de-centralist...particularly those closer to the anarchist type of outlook.

These radical currents, light up the common problems/patterns that afflict emancipatory streams, however different.

Thus, we have seen cultural/spiritual revolutions within the faith based and also the non-believer traditions for hundreds of years. Since the 20s and 30s we have seen spiritually committed Gandhian traditions gain tremendous social influence in our country. Since the 50s we have seen streams of Christian socialist and Engaged Buddhist type, gaining some social power. We have even seen the result of the atheist 'Cultural Revolution' in China that intended to 'cleanse' their 'Marxian Revolution'. The question that is crucial today is: however radical, rebellious, spiritual/idealistic (believer or not) or compassionate be these streams and their intentions, why do they get embroiled in the strangely familiar world of *pollution of power*, as they grow large? We might believe in any icon or ideology or even anti-ideology or counter-culture. These might be part of God-based, atheistic or even post-modernist streams. Nevertheless, we see a similar picture everywhere.

We see the *common threads* of hierarchy/hegemony that are subtle, even compassionate and radical within the field of all rebellions, mutual aid and compassion. Of course, there are always the positive *common threads* of anti-hierarchy, counter-hegemony and common grounds of resistance as well.

Our *third domain* looks specifically into these *common threads/patterns* of *hierarchy, competition and expansionism*, and also the counter-currents (positive connections and common grounds) – within the streams of cultural resistance, large or tiny, visible or invisible.

Here, we are not saying that these *common threads* are the essence, the building blocks of the *specific bodies* we mentioned earlier. All we are saying is that these *specific bodies* of different colour and the *common threads* keep creating each other – in *interbeing*.

Our brief sketch of the field of cultural rebellion is based on the opening offered by Tiep-Hien. We will introduce this terrain mostly from the point of view of our tiep hien. **We will quickly skip through it to go to our main concern –the situation as seen from the third domain.**

In fact we see cultural rebellion at two enmeshed levels.

First is the way it is generally understood – rebellion against the culture of Domination – the problem as seen from the *first* and *second domain*. The *specific bodies* are more appropriately discussed there.

Second is the problem of tackling the *seeds and soil* of Domination within spaces of all rebellion, even cultural. This is the problem as seen from the *third domain*. The *common threads* are a central theme here.

Here, our discussion will mostly be around the **second** level. We are going about it in this way, not because we consider it to be more important than the other. The **first** level is by far larger in size. But we feel the need

surfacing

to concentrate on the **second** level, as it is our focus in our write-up, and because it has received less attention so far.

Egalitarian Cultural (Spiritual) Rebellion - I

RECLAIMING 'SPIRITUALITY' (IDEALISM AND IMAGINATION, EMPATHY AND ETHICS, DEFINITIONS AND MEANING, CULTURE), FROM THE PRISONS OF THE SPIRITUAL (CULTURAL) ESTABLISHMENT

One side of the Establishment we have is U.S. led globalised State-militarism offering 'peace, security and infinite justice', heralding a pillaging and capitalist global order without any cover. The other, the 'compassionate' side of the Establishment is the 'Welfare Statism' (from U.N. to World Bank, down to the Government and the NGOs controlled by them), the market of 'meaning, dream, security and satisfaction', Guru, 'inner peace', and 'collective' /community /patriarchal family life, ceremonies and festivals led by Domination religion.

We see tiep hien stand for a rebellion against the exploitation, control and engineering (political-economy), not only of our 'labour' but also of our 'spirituality'. *What do they mean by this spirituality?*

Exploring the Common Grounds of Emancipatory Spirituality

The concept of **spirituality**, before the 60's, was the site of so much angry misunderstanding (Footnote – 1, given in the end of Part-C), mystification and confusion, conflicts, even war. Since then, despite the spread of communalism/fundamentalism, things have improved somewhat, somewhere. One example, in academic writing:

"Philosophers speak of our human spirituality as our capacity for self-transcendence, a capacity demonstrated in our ability to know the truth, to relate to others lovingly, and to commit ourselves freely to persons and ideals. Psychologists sometimes use the term for that aspect of personal essence that gives a person power, energy, and motive force. Religious persons speak of spirituality as actualisation of the human self-transcendence by whatever is acknowledged as the ultimate or the Holy, that is, by whatever is considered religious." ("Spirituality in Psychotherapy: Emerging Recognition of Significance" – Jose Parappully; PSYCHOLOGY FOUNDATIONS – THE JOURNAL, June, 2002)

Here, as with other things, our exploration of spirituality will be coloured by our *taking side*, our concern for engagement with suffering, alienation and systems of oppression. We will cull together all definitions of spirituality, from all streams that can enrich such engagement and emancipation.

Regarding the concept of *spirituality*, values and culture, we find some common currents amongst:

- Differing schools of religion; also, streams within Buddhism that were opposed to the concept of God;
- Socialist traditions associated with atheism or religion.

All *organized* traditions.

Informal streams – our everyday values /concepts of good and bad, beautiful, idealistic, non-careerist or non-power oriented, non-egotistic, ethical – in ordinary personal and social life.

Since the last four decades, Christian socialist, engaged Buddhist and so many other streams have been exploring these *common currents*. They have been making inventories' of such currents. Surprisingly, such *common grounds* are too many. These are usually called counter-hegemonic currents of culture/spirituality. However, these are always enmeshed in hegemony. Also, these are usually expressed in different and even warring languages.

We describe these (*common grounds*) in terms of our ecological metaphor:

Vertical Spirituality:

– the toxins of the *Desert* :

For Tiep Hien these are all the negative currents /drives / patterns and connections, at the level of individual, relationships, clusters and social organisations. These negative processes are the moral, spiritual, cultural, psychological lifeblood of y. This lifeblood is made up of egotism /dependency, blocks and insensitivities, vertical growth, control and competition, unequal exchange/valuing, exploitation.

These are in specific bodies (systems) like Statism, capitalism, imperialism, brahmanism/casteism/racism, paternalism, genderism, centralist developmentalism, meritocracy and so on. They thrive also as *common threads* – negative currents spread everywhere, connecting everything.

Moreover, Vertical spirituality is, attachment and subordination to all type of higher powers, authorities, Gods, normalcy, ideas and paths, even 'revolutionary'.

Horizontal (Egalitarian) Spirituality:

– the nourishment for the *Spring*:

For tiep hien horizontal spirituality implies nothing less than standing against all Domination / Hegemony, its values and drives, consumerism, *spectacles* and Hierarchy, all the negative currents / patterns and connections, at all levels, from personal, relationships, organisational to social. This means further, rebelling against all authorities and ideas – existing concepts of *spirituality*, compassion /morality /normalcy, caring, acting, understanding and so on, even 'emancipatory' ones; melting them down in tiep hien's furnace of 'emptiness' and reconstructing /reclaiming them; relating and connecting with positive currents – wherever they are – even the positive currents within the culture one is rebelling against.

This implies, struggling against suffering, exploitation, and oppression, *without any pre-conditions and without any limits*. The system exploits our labour and economic resources. It also exploits our spirits (our capacity of compassionate practice and ability to create and pursue meaning and dignity, love, idealism and anti-egotism). It oppresses all sentient beings, the liveliness of the whole of the biosphere and ecosphere.

This also implies that

- one is able to struggle on one's own behalf,
- also for one's co-sufferers (class, caste, gender etc.).

Our tiep-hien's commitment against suffering takes them beyond. This adds a crucial terrain to the dimension of the *self* and class / community awareness'. Thus, this *compassion against suffering* must commit,

- for all others, giving priority to those who are more oppressed than us, the bottom layers in every nook and corner of the society; to be sensitive for the voiceless ... 'even' insects and blades of grass and the ecosphere, even the categories of suffering that have no direct root in Domination/Hierarchy or even those beyond – that we cannot perceive or imagine today.

We struggle to reclaim idealism; pursuit of compassion, and definition and meaning,

– And to engage in all creative acts that may be beyond one's survival needs; that defy the *dictatorship* of money, market, career, desire for power over others.

– In the terrain of support infrastructures for our personal and social life (Footnote – 2, given in the end of Part-C); for the affirmation, celebration, exploration and commitments in our festivals and social rituals of our mutuality and togetherness, our joy, life at the level of individuals, relationships, clusters, community, collective unconscious (Footnote –3, given in the end of Part-C), biosphere and the whole of Nature;

– To realize the potentialities and journey of the *self* and other, however strange and different they may look to us; exploring our inner spaces and improving the communication between our consciousness, our desires, our body and whole of our psyche, at the personal, transpersonal, community and social levels; (Footnote – 4, given in the end)

– To give and receive nurture;

– To accept, witness, explore pain, to take responsibility, to take our appropriate share of guilt for negative currents / patterns inside us, thereby to struggle against ones negative inner self, defence, blocks and the currents of hegemony.

To do our tiep, to do our hien;

And so on. Everyone can keep adding to it.

Immense currents of such nourishments of the *Spring* are always flowing through society and all of us, though in bits and pieces. We all want to do something meaningful and beautiful in our lives. Extensive currents of helping some one in need, a hurt being, empathy, love, resisting an unjust act and rebellion flow everywhere. (Footnote – 5, given in the end) In fact, with such powerful currents flowing everywhere, we need

to dig, explore and understand how the *Desert* manipulates, splits and fragments, shackles and harnesses the nourishment and drives of the *Spring*! Even our pining to seek a meaningful existence is mostly canalised and experienced via the toxic streams of the *Desert*. Many a time in the process of doing something 'good', we get manipulated to legitimise and empower Domination and our egotism to a large extent.

How Domination rules by trapping, distorting and harnessing our egalitarian spiritual longings:

I must make some sacrifice for a worthy cause, go to the war to save my people, die for my Motherland – I'll do something meaningful through my heroism, even death, and - - - may also get a worthy name;

I must defend the weak and the victims, create justice, suppress "anti-socials", become a good police officer to uphold the Law and the State. I will be dutiful and committed, and - - - also go up my professional ladder;

Doing great deeds, creating glory for my family, peer group, caste, religion, class, nation, humanity gives me meaning, worth, identity, makes me authentic; I must do a lot for others (Footnote – 6, given in the end);

I must marry and create offspring to continue our valuable tradition/lifeline – also my name; We need to fulfil God's wish; I must strive and sacrifice to be 'excellent', to rise up to the elite levels, and be 'worthy', also to make my children/my group go to the top. These are my duties and will give meaning to my existence.

Serving God is the highest Spirituality; I must love people in order to serve God...

I must rise above greed, seduction and decadence of consumerism and the false Gods; I must restore the lost glory of the true spirituality, my community and its true religion;

I must not show off my goods, I must make them non-conspicuous; after all I am above the ordinary ethos.

We said earlier (p.) how vertical spirituality organises our *ego* as *egotism*, how it fills our desire to do good things, fills our emptiness with it's meaning and values. Here, even the best of our efforts become an irony.

I must not compete; I must become a good person; best amongst others.

Vertical spirituality does this by identifying the *ego* with the project of 'possessing and expanding' **our** 'true' spiritual (cultural) streams and 'correct authorities'. These 'correct authorities' are then put forward as the sole genuine source of those 'True Spiritual streams'. Struggling against the 'wrong ones', striving for such expansionism here is legitimised as good work, sacrifice, compassion and even a mission against egotism. The insidious and pervasive power and machinations of these processes are indicated below.

DESPITE WITNESSING THAT REVOLUTIONS WERE GETTING CO-OPTED, FOR ALL THESE CENTURIES, WHY EGALITARIAN TRADITIONS FAILED TO SEE THROUGH THESE MANIPULATIONS & RECLAIM THEIR SUBVERSIVE POTENTIALS?

Why rather each new initiative was always confident that, "This won't happen to us, we are correct and we shall overcome"?

This *block* highlights how Domination (vertical spirituality / faith), its currents and patterns, like the *Trojan virus*, infiltrates the traditions of liberation – posing as its own force. These seeds of Domination dressed-up as the 'finally correct and committed' liberation, manipulate our consciousness and conscience via the invisible sub-conscious. These thereby try to divert the resources of our reason and faith to further the *Desert* within.

Finally, these viruses create defences by setting up blocks to introspection and stock taking of our history.

Despite the thick history of failures, each emancipatory school believes, "After all those false starts, we now at last possess the true spirituality and path (this or that God/teacher or *scientific theory*). Some might call it proletarian *class awareness and culture*. This expansionist *egotism/dependency* can masquerade even as 'anti-expansionism', 'anti-egotism' and 'freedom'. It creates fierce competition. The heat of competition creates false consciousness, its patterns and tradition, and we (opposing sides of the conflict) remain trapped in it.

We saw earlier how, within the traditions focussing on inner change, the personal and universal dimensions of compassion and anti-egotism got torn from those that emphasised the struggle for outer change. We saw how streams of such compassion and humility got split from those of compassion-in-resistance against exploitation. This fracture and subsequent war became a pervasive tradition and has perhaps caused the deepest injury to the life of emancipatory spirituality (culture).

Scientific socialists got stuck to the belief that cultural traditions of compassion, caring and activism, introspection and rising above egotism (that we are calling as aspects of spirituality and inner change), primarily exist and get created in the struggle for power against exploitation, and can flourish only when the system of private ownership of means of production and the political dictatorship of the present exploiters is overcome. They considered striving for such cultural changes before overthrowing the exploiters, as nothing but naivety, impractical idealism and diversion from the real work.

Therefore, Domination religion, State, paternalism and the guru industry were left without any organised opposition. Here, they easily could co-opt most of the streams of *inner change*, *the informal terrain* and most anti-Establishment folk traditions. This then isolated emancipatory spirituality (culture) and striving for *inner change* from the struggle against exploitation and injustice - the *outer*, the *material*.

RESPONSE OF TIEP HIEN

The whole of their life, struggle and death, their charter and sutras are their *offering* to strive against these traps and fractures.

Tiep Hien offer a two-pronged strategy.

surfacing

For themselves, and all those who seek to go deep into this type of problem, their call is to strive relentlessly to locate and reduce in our minds all *vertical (establishment) spirituality*, all schools that claim, '**we are the true source**'.

For others, the large variety of *organised* sector, and the vast *informal* one, their appeal is to seek nourishment from all the nooks and niches of the *Spring*. Their call is to celebrate each of the variety of compassion, resistance and understanding and their connections. They believe that these positive streams are invisibly connected and related to each other, **however much these might be enmeshed in hegemony and authoritarian traditions**. Tiep Hien appeal to stand against Domination without compromise and yet connect the positive threads tied to each stream, to help disentangle each strand of positive current from such enmeshed bunches, to then reweave and enrich them. Tiep Hien appeal for this to be attempted, *whatever be the language, faith, authority, colour, shape and size of these positive currents*.

Winds of this culture of compassion, understanding and practice (directed outward and inwards both) will help in reducing the obstacles, inside and outside our mind and traditions, blocking the possibilities of mutual-enrichment of positive currents all around. This will help improve the *interconnection in diversity*, our main weapon against the *Desert*.

For themselves (also for those who want to give high priority to this problem), Tiep Hien (64 – 74) call for beginning with a striving for a journey of radical scrutiny and deconstruction of every existing convention, concept and tradition, however much these stand for emancipation. Thus though they call themselves Buddhists, they make the unique declaration,

“the order does not consider any Sutra or any group of Sutra as its basic text, ... does not recognise any systematic arrangement of Buddhist teachings as proposed by various schools of Buddhism”

They first declare that *the true Dhamma spirit* is more important to them than any sutra or School of Dhamma. But then, what is this *Dhamma Spirit*? It is not something mysterious or cosmic, some holistic philosophy or spiritual realisation, something *above* us. Tiep Hien declare that this Dhamma spirit is,

“becoming open to all forms of activity that can revive the true spirit of compassion and understanding in life”,

For this, they,

“seek to transform themselves in order to help change society in the direction of increased understanding and more compassion.”

Tiep Hien would have fallen into the same old trap had they asserted that this *Dhamma spirit* is to be best found in their *sutras, their order*. Instead they state categorically that, this *spirit* is to be discovered within,

“the entire Buddhist order and all other traditions”.

This can be read as a call to discover and link to this spirit in each of the *organised sector* and vast spaces of the *informal terrain* in our *ordinary* life.

They seem to be saying, “*We must be relentless in disentangling from the mindset that there is a ‘single Sun’.* Though a ‘single Sun’ does help us to see certain things very clearly, yet it blinds us to all the stars. The more we can stand against our egotistical claim that we possess the Sun, the better will we build up the ‘eye’ to see in the night. Then we can learn to connect with the ‘ordinary and little’ lights, see the colours of warmth that are spread all around.” Any act of compassion, caring, resistance, rebellion, anti-egotism, and understanding, however ordinary, scattered and flowing throughout the whole of society can then become our source, our stars, along with the *sun of one colour* that each organised stream upholds.

They offer the outlook of *interbeing* to overcome our *verticalism*, to tap into and flow with these vast resources. This is their deepest offering to dissolve the *ego-barriers* between the *organised* and the vast *informal* terrain, and those between different sections of the *organised sector* – to overcome the cracks and fissures, and deepening the *Spring*.

FROM WHERE DID TIEP HIEN TAP INTO SUCH A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF EGOTISM/HEGEMONY?

Many streams of Buddhism have always propounded the triple Netis (negation) – *There is no God; There is no Atman* (the ‘soul’ that exists even after death); *There is no Supreme Truth*. This had been its war cry against the brahmanical ideology, its varna / caste-hierarchy based empires twenty five hundred years ago. **However, could this understanding prevent much of Buddhism from becoming the ideology of exploitative theocracies and empires all over Asia?**

We must see the insidious and extensive subtleties of *paternalism* – the system of *guardianism*– the soil of all types of Dominations, particularly in Asia.

Domination uses both the *outer (overt force and structures)* and the *inner control (internalised and covert socialisation)* in order to rule. The *inner* control here means denying space to people to develop their own (horizontal) relationships and autonomy (positive ego). This is done by organising a chain of parents, guardians, teachers and Gurus upon and inside our mind. They suffocate us by ‘love’, guarding, moral pressure and ‘education’. This is interwoven with denying us all kinds of social, economic and sexual space since childhood. Here the judge, Law, police, coercion, force and the Church (ruling religion) are “embedded inside our mind”. *We are conditioned to fear even freedom, to stand alone (or along with our horizontal friendships), to stand without any sanction/ authority and outside the norm.*

Strangely enough, this kind of omnipresent paternalism, a sort of kingdom of guardians at all levels **has no appropriate name as yet**. Possibly our eyes are so enmeshed in it that we do not ‘see’ it!

States in Asia always needed much less police, laws, Judiciary and coercion to rule as compared to Europe. Most of the engineering of ruling was done by the tradition of paternalism and hierarchies infiltrating social institutions beginning from grassroots –patriarchs in joint families, elders, Gurus, panches and panchayats. (Footnote – 7, given in the end)

The specific form of paternalism prevalent in Asia (or should we call it *guardianism*?) is perhaps rooted in the vastly older (as compared to Europe) traditions of mediaeval Empire States. These reigned here for more than four thousand years, till middle of the twentieth century. It (*guardianism*) created deep designs /patterns (templates) of organisation and behaviour in families, castes and communities, classes, business houses and so on. These patterns and traditions are everywhere – whether within the rulers or ruled, patriarchal, religious and educational organisations, social reform movements, and political parties *even revolutionary*.

Though this *guardianism* is present all over the world, yet it is difficult for non-Asians to imagine the depths of this soil, its ability to condition our mind, our need for *anchor, authority and faith*. **As compared to the West, in Asia, within the streams of emancipation, paternalism is more of a problem than individualism.** Imagine, ***what would have happened if Bakunin or the humbler Kropotkin had preached their anti-authoritarian brand of Liberation here in Asia? In no time they would be worshipped by masses of people as the 'real thing' – the 'new authority'!*** They might have then begun to think, “Let us use this immense force of worship to break the shackles of colonialism – which is after all the main root of servility in the masses.”

It is said that when Tolstoy wrote a pamphlet on the oppression and emancipation in India (possibly in the second decade of 20th century), Gandhi decided to translate and publish the pamphlet. But, Gandhi, who was an authentic anarchist otherwise, wanted Tolstoy's permission to delete his reference “waiting for the Avatar/messiah to 'solve our problem' as another shackle inside the mind of the subjugated Indian”! See how, later in our paternalistic culture, an anarchist Gandhi was worshipped and changed into Mahatma/Gandhibaba – the 'Father of the Independence movement/Congress Party' and then 'Father of the Nation'.

Both Marxism and anarchism came to Asia practically at the same time. In fact, currents resembling anarchism within Taoist/Buddhist/Zen, adivasi and subaltern, bhakti/sufi traditions were numerous and far older here. However, we know of no formal egalitarian anarchist network in India and possibly in Asia till today.

Compare this with the West, where all kinds of anarchism have flourished since the last hundred and fifty years. In fact, since the 60s, authoritarian brands of Marxism has declined so much that we do not hear of them much in the contemporary anti-establishment struggles. At the same time, anarchist modes of resistance, movements, de-centralised, local associations, mutual aiding, living without grand authority, law, vanguard organisation, without associating with ruling processes and funding from above seems to be the major tradition in the emancipatory spaces.

On the other side, in Asia, Marxism saw immense growth, its most authoritarian/paternalist sub-traditions growing the fastest, from Korea to Kerala for good and bad. **Where else in the world will you find the birthday of Stalin being observed today with such fanfare, by both the ruling Marxists and the rebel opposition except in Calcutta?!**

Radical fringes in the anti-Domination struggles have always tried to cope with this omnipotent problem (*Guardianism*) here. They realised that struggling for *outer change* is of no use without changing the *seed and surfacing*

the soil, without deep *inner change*. They had evolved a storehouse of such realisations from ancient times. Thus see this saying, popular in anti-establishment Zen traditions (– by I-Hsuan):

Kill anything that you happen on.

Kill the Buddha if you happen to meet him.

Kill a patriarch or an arhat (saint) if you happen to meet him.

Kill your parents or relatives if you happen to meet them.

Only then can you be free, not bound...

(Note, What can be a stronger metaphor for the pacifists than to *kill*?)

(- Quoted from, "**Demanding the Impossible, A History of Anarchism – Be Realistic: Demand the Impossible!**" – Peter Marshall)

Alongside, see radical dalit bhakti traditions of India:

Ravidas says don't do puja to Brahmins, who are without merit

Honour instead the feet of the Chandalas who are full of merit

Dependency is evil, the dependent are miserable;

Ravidas considers dependence the lowest of all

(Chandalas are a caste that is lowermost in caste/varna hierarchy of hinduism.)

– Gail Omvedt in Buddhism, Bhakti and the VHP – II; The Hindu, Dec. 02.

CAN WE EVEN CALL TIEP HIEN (64-74), *BUDDHISTS*?

They turn upside-down the tradition of searching for and then starting with some vertical category, a *correct* analysis, philosophy, authority, ism or religion. Though Tiep Hien do not believe in any *God*, they never declare, *we are atheists*. They give highest priority to work at critiquing any vertical category looming over us, while appreciating its positive sides at the same time. They keep the fusion of compassion, understanding and practice directed inwards and outwards both above everything else. With an empathetic mind equipped with the *search-light* and mirror of compassionate living and critical understanding, we are to learn from and relate to every egalitarian philosophy, ism, religion or tradition, currents and patterns of compassion and resistance however tiny, visible or invisible.

Thus, they redefine Buddhism in a way that is certainly not the conventional one!

HOWEVER, HOW TO PROCEED?

Even during the difficult times of war, we find Tiep Hien engaged in all sorts of cultural, non-authoritarian, educational and social actions (along with their anti-war movement).

On one side their principle seems to be to nurture all work for creating the non-paternalistic and non-egotistic soil, the *inner change*. At the same time our tiep hien call to help to interlink all rebellion against oppression, to push back the *outer walls of Domination*, so that the seeds of compassion, understanding and action have room to sprout and flourish.

surfacing

THE SITUATION HERE, TODAY:

Let us consider a significant section of the people for whom the minimum survival needs are fulfilled. For them today, capitalist consumerism, welfare Statism and religious Establishment tries its best to create a 'happy' and 'meaningful' world. It offers such an attractive market of power, satisfaction and meaning. People get drowned in this flood.

However there is something that cannot be satisfied. A core in our mind gets even emptier. It is here that the positive streams, working via our social sub-conscious (or collective unconscious or whatever one calls it) play a vital role. These streams constantly keep the quest alive for authenticity, horizontal *love*, *compassion*, resistance and practice. All this keeps deepening our criticality – an inner potential that can feel through the subterfuge and sense the *Desert* everywhere. This deepens the disquiet within. Our mind gets fragmented and lost and we experience ourselves to be in a state of perpetual turmoil. Here, the need to go beyond the self-centric, consumerist and conformist aspects of life becomes an urgency. At this juncture, through the dryness of the dry Desert, we come upon an ironic coincidence – we can see strength of the *Spring*, often negatively, *becoming aware of its absence*, despairing for the (pulverised and weakened) positive cultural and ethical drives in society.

Socialist streams associated with existential philosophy and religion, like many currents in Gandhian, radical Christian socialist, engaged Buddhist, and a few other streams have been sensitive towards this crisis. Unfortunately the whole spectrum of the old organised sector from Marxian to dalit-ist, even the mainstream socialist and Gandhian, have mostly remained blind or embittered and helpless spectators to this cultural (spiritual) crisis that we all are drowning in. There are currents of resistance, rebel initiatives everywhere. But they are too fragmented, unstable and invisible.

This gives the *spiritual Establishment* a field where there is no co-ordinated opposition. They keep failing to deliver and yet thriving. Medieval Taliban and RSS to pop electronic Guru industry to the negative currents within *post-modernism* highlighted by our 'radical' mainstream media keep flourishing. Thus many TV channels have come up (in India), catering exclusively to this *spirituality* market. Russia sees a sweep of old Christianity, and chant to Hare Krishna. (Footnote – 8, given in the end)

Even the term *spirituality* is so enmeshed in this vast market. We are in two minds as to whether we should use this term for our egalitarian purpose. Here we may take note of the fact that Tiep Hien avoid using it.

Reclaiming Our Imagination And Empathy

Let us repeat a running theme of our notes. Humanity has always felt and known that the world is connected much more densely and in surfacing

strange ways than we can see, feel or imagine. Most organised/Dominational religions appropriated this nebulous realisation. They 'explained' such realisations, connectivity and holism, as the kingdom of God/vertical Superpowers. For instance, many streams of hinduism hold, "You (as independent entity) are nothing; you are created and connected, via God to everything; God's will is everything." They used this kind of thinking to legitimise their holy laws and totalitarian world-view. Thus, to empower their system, they would engineer and exploit the power of our imagination and empathy.

Streams of anti-authoritarianism and rationalism rebelled against such building of 'vertical' myths. But, unfortunately, most of them threw the baby with the bathwater. They rejected the dense (mostly invisible and unimaginable) connectivity, along with the rule of the 'holy' authority. Standing with the streams of positivistic and mechanistic science, they insisted that whatever is visible /measurable exists and is the real, 'primary reality'.

In the West, this view united with streams of individualism and created a world of individuals who had to fend for themselves, autonomous but separate and lonely.

There, since the nineteenth century, conflict between the traditions of God-based totalitarian connectivity and the rationalist/old science-based atheist/individual-centric belief systems was severe and extensive.

Our world of socialism (in India) got badly fractured by this Western influence. Most streams struggling against the totalitarian rule of God and the oppressive systems blessed by Him took as an anchor the individual-centric/ atheist/ rationalist/ scientific worldview.

Many streams within Buddhism/Taoism /zen in the East had rejected God and such holy authorities. However, they had not rejected the vision of dense connectivity, interbeing. For them, the 'visible' part of the world was the tip of the waves and icebergs in the ocean of interbeing. Separate and self-contained entities, even conceptual ones, were 'nothing'.

Thus, for us today, these rebel Buddhist/Taoist /zen streams provide a base to go beyond this fracture. Here, we can conceive a world where everything is far too densely connected and inter-creating than what we can usually see or can ever imagine. In this world, there are

too many currents /patterns, connecting, flowing and shaping us. They are mostly invisible, yet powerful, positive and negative. Yet there is no authority/power above our world. Here our individuality, our mutual relationships and all other horizontal categories and processes can become as free, rich and empowering as we can imagine, empathise, realise and make them.

Our capacity for imagining, feeling, experiencing, fantasising and 'seeing' entities that do not exist 'materially', is a core human attribute. It is a reality, a truth in itself. But the dominant system usually distorts and exploits this capacity of ours. It creates all sorts of Gods and Devils, 'holy' and 'profane'. It also creates 'secular' myths as 'truths', objects of worship like 'correct authorities', patriotism, institutions of 'education', 'science', 'government and democracy', 'nationalism', notions of normalcy, superior/inferior, 'good', 'bad', 'pervert', of 'enemy' communities, supremacy of blood-ties and the 'independent self'. Thus, Establishment uses our imagination as a crucial tool to enslave us by making us believe all those entities to be real and our experiential truth.

Spiritual rebellion means to “*liberate our imagination*” (slogan during the rebellion of the 65 - 66, Paris).

Instead of angels and imps, can we not imagine streams of counter-hegemony – friendship, resistance, and love, the world of our free imagination and fantasy, and other positive currents /patterns within our nostalgic world as *real* and *alive*? Can we not see these empathetic and authentic *beings* enmeshed in but also grappling with the toxic, degrading, malignant and *living* processes of hegemony? These currents have power; they surround, flow through and shape us ceaselessly. As they construct us, we can ally or fight with them. Like our individual selves, these live streams also have something like *consciousness*, *sub-conscious*, *ego*, *self-worth*, *autonomy* & so on. (Footnote – 9, given in the end)

This world can be as rich, colourful and mysterious, a source of ethical and emotional security/strength to us as any offered by Domination religion. In fact, here the various levels of togetherness that is not harnessed and ruled by Domination can be more empowering and lively. Most religions give maximum power and life to 'higher' entities and their 'middlemen'. However, in this model of *interbeing* and streams, we can celebrate a direct and enchanted relationship with our memories, imaginations, all kinds of living currents, patterns and streams, universal and specific compassions, resistance and creativities; friends at a distance, of the past, or long since dead; sentient beings, biosphere and Nature. We can keep connecting, dissolving and crystallising out of them. Here we lose our omnipotent Father, and His totalitarian security that we get via Domination religion and other paternalist traditions, even via authoritarian atheist ones. Nevertheless, we

need not be lonely islands, rational and isolated individuals as in some 'secular' models. This is the world in which we can do our *tiép* and *hien*.

Reference OUR REFLECTION - C-3

The 'Three Refuges' in Engaged Buddhism

What does "taking refuge" in *Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha* (the *Three Jewels* of Buddhism) mean here? Is it surrender to some *vertical authority*— as it is usually taken to mean in most Buddhist traditions?

Let us listen to Thich Nhat Hanh on this point:

"Taking refuge in the Three Jewel is a very deep practice. It means, first of all, to take refuge in ourselves. Taking refuge in the Buddha in myself, I vow to realize the Great Way in order to give rise to the highest mind. Taking refuge in the Dharma in myself, I vow to attain understanding and wisdom as immense as the ocean. Taking refuge in the Sangha in myself, I vow to build a community without obstacles.

If, for example, you are a single parent and think that you need to be married in order to have stability, please reconsider. You may have more stability right now than with another person. Taking refuge in yourself protects the stability you already have. Taking refuge in what is solid helps you become more solid and develop yourself into a ground of refuge for your child and your friends. Please make yourself into someone we can rely on. We need you – the children need you; the trees and the birds also need you. Please practice going back to yourself, living each moment of your life fully, in mindfulness. Walking, breathing, sitting, eating, and drinking tea in mindfulness are all ways of taking refuge.

Taking refuge in a Sangha means putting your trust in a community of solid members who practice mindfulness together. It is difficult if not impossible to practice mindfulness without a Sangha. Teachers and teachings are important for the practice, but a community of friends is the most essential ingredient. We need a Sangha to support our practice....

(Community As a Resource – Thich Nhat Hanh, p.193, ENGAGED BUDDHIST READER, Ed. Arnold Kotler, Parallax Press, Berkeley, California, U.S.A.

OUR REFLECTION - C-4

Describing the Ceremony

Many Marxists think, even though Tiep Hien has no God, yet they must be ritualistic and anti-rational, as they sound so similar to Dominational religion! However, look at the details of their *ceremony*. Is it not a beautiful way to celebrate togetherness, introspection and activism with each other?

OUR REFLECTION - C-5

ON THE TWO PROMISES FOR CHILDREN –

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPASSION, PRACTICE AND UNDERSTANDING

Tiep Hien call for a *cultural rebellion* to reclaim and reconstruct *Understanding* – our intellectual resources for the oppressed. Here, *oppressed* refers to not only humans, but also all other living beings and their habitat that is the whole of Nature. (Footnote – 10, given in the end)

Negative streams put *understanding, compassion and practice for inner and outer change* in conflict with each other. (We saw consequences of this in the earlier section – P.). *Understanding* without its roots (compassion and practice) gets easily imprisoned and exploited by Domination. Hence, Tiep Hien call for radically scrutinising each of our pre-conceived notions about *understanding*. They call for a movement to drag everything, each notion, through their furnace of *emptiness*, melt it down, and reconstruct it, realising their positive and negative connections, for the purpose of compassion and practice.

Putting *Understanding* Above Compassionate Living

From our old brahmanical traditions to modern science, 'principles'/'laws'/'reason', a formal and codified 'understanding', is put on a pedestal and worshipped. It is regarded as being superior to feelings and compassion, caring, experiencing and practicing.

Thus, we are instructed to be compassionate as it is God's law or a holy requirement. From the side of 'hard' science, we are taught to be dispassionate and objective. We might be allowed to be compassionate, but because it is ordained by the *theory of evolution* – it is the code of the gene – as in 'socio-biology'.

'Life sciences' are taught to children by training them to cutup frogs. As a consequence, they are also trained to block their feelings for another life, a sensitive and sentient being "for the cause of science". This path is so different from using our intellect to respect, love and protect them.

Under the flag of bringing 'progress, development, science and civilisation', anthropology, the *science of Man*, and other social, economic, political, psychological and management *sciences* were developed in the old Imperialist countries - mainly to *exploit, engineer, legitimise and rule*.

And, what has been the usual fate of the science and engineering, love and commitment to 'improve' humans and society, in the reign of Domination? This science grew with selective and controlled breeding to

'improve' crops, then cattle, dogs and horses along with Darwin's theory, genetics, statistics, eugenics. This science has provided inspiration, rationale and technology for all kinds of racism, imperialism and fascism and their social/population engineering.

In fact, these kinds of *understandings* as 'objective Truths' that do not emerge from love for the object of knowledge were borrowed from traditions of studying non-living things. There, love for knowledge, valuing the one who creates 'higher' knowledge is always put above 'mundane' and 'sentimental' things like love for the 'target' or the 'object' being studied, the persons or beings around. In fact, this tradition has been glorified to make it a central spiritual 'principle' of high science. Marxian tradition, born of compassion for the exploited, believed in using this kind of (truncated) 'objective Truths' and *understanding* to help end suffering. Then, they too got embroiled in the 'scientific analyses', 'Knowledge – Power' tradition of the Establishment and kept getting cut-off from their original source of *compassion*.

Taking side of the proletariat is surely a crucial core of compassion. But believing that the *working class outlook* is the sole or highest source of compassion, and justifying this by giving it the status of a scientific truth /understanding became problematic. Then this specific river of compassion got cut-off from the rest of its ecosystem.

Similarly, the two-way connection of experience / living /practice with *understanding* was broken. Practice was given a high value, but only as the 'hands and legs' of the conscious mind, the 'brahmin', the 'revolutionary scientific theory'. Moreover then, the outward component of practice got cut off from its twin, the inner.

Such *understanding*, when cut off from its source, the varieties of *compassion*, empathy, experience and practice, became fractured, mechanical and closed. This created a lack in understanding, and blocked this tradition from striving against egotism and other pollution of power within. The more they believed that they have 'The Truth', as, science represented Truth, the more they became trapped in self-righteous egotism /dependency.

On the other side, see what happens to compassion and practice' when it is cut-off from its enabler, the intellect/understanding

In Dominational religion, *compassion* and *practice* is subordinated to *faith*. We surrender our *reason* to the *higher truth of God*. Similarly in Statism or paternalism (*guardianism*), our *compassion* is surrendered to various authorities, moralities and the 'norms'. Thus, cut-off from an autonomous reason and then blinded, *compassion and practice* gets easily harnessed to the Establishment.

For instance, *compassion* in paternalist family and school practices hard to train children to become good soldiers and managers for companies and States that thrive upon making profit by causing suffering to others, people and animals. *Compassion* gets reduced to practice of charity and social work funded from above.

Even under a humanist liberation tradition like the Gandhian, *compassion and practice* is put under the strict rule of *Truth, authority and morality*. It then gets cut-off from the full strength of critical analyses.

Exploiting classes find it easy to subvert this compassion and practice. Though the Gandhian tradition takes a path so different from Marxian, it gets co-opted into Establishment all the same!

TIEP HIEN ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM

They begin by defining *understanding* as an intellectual and also an empathetic ability, a means so that *compassion and practice* is better enabled, *to be able to love and protect all beings*. Thus our intellect is subordinated to a categorical purpose. Moreover, in Tiep Hien, this *understanding* is never, for any moment, to be separated from *compassionate sensibility and direct-practice-realization*. Hence, in the Tiep Hien stream the categories – *compassion, empathy, feeling, understanding* and practice that engage with *suffering* and its causes - *material* and *spiritual* - are always densely interwoven as in the Spring to strive against the whole *Desert* eco-system of exploitation and suffering. All of these categories thus are organically linked - in positive *interbeing*. At every moment they give meaning and life to each other.

TIEP HIEN EMPHASISE ON THE POSITIVE INTERBEING OF SOCIALISM AND, SOCIAL, RADICAL AND DEEP ECOLOGY

Can a movement for equality, even based on compassion, practice and understanding, but solely for the human species, ever lead to socialism? Can such struggles for socialism ever resist and take on all the immense and insidious dehumanisation and pollution of power? Our feelings and compassion for a hurt insect or a plant – what have these to do with social and cultural revolutionary struggles? Are these some beautiful ethics that can flourish only after the rough road of revolution? These are the questions that we need to ask and ponder upon.

When we deepen our meaning of liberation to include all beings and all Nature, we connect with insights of *social, radical* and *deep ecology*. These all have one-sidedness and negative currents. However, we also see deep positive currents in them. And, are they not all in positive *interbeing*?

Accepting and becoming a party to the exploitation and destruction of other beings and Nature - just for our convenience, comfort, handed down lifestyle and food habits, profit and greed, some given idea of 'development' - corrupts our *compassion & understanding*. It encourages a mind-set that finds easy logic to exploit/destroy humans too.

Before some societies started secreting the toxins of Domination, exploitation, and hierarchies on humans, they were doing all these on *others* who were labelled as 'animals'. How much did this tradition contribute to an emergence of the tradition of exploiting 'humans'?

Soon we had the Mediterranean slave societies where 'equality' was meant for non-slaves. Slaves were *others*, labelled as "animals-that-talk". They had same rights and status as the "Beasts of Burden".

We have heard anarchists and Marxists discussing on this issue with *animal liberation* tendencies recently, since 80's in Europe. This is most encouraging. Recently we came to know about a beautiful debate in U.K.,
surfacing

summarized in the booklet – ***Beasts of Burden***. (Distributed in India by: Faridabad Majdoor Samachar, Autopin Jhuggi, Faridabad, U.P.; and some friends).

This booklet is raising many important questions as to why animal slaughter should be opposed – as it is a pillar of capitalist accumulation. But, comparatively it goes less into questioning our tradition of relationship with animals and the biosphere that places humans at the top. This placing of humans at the top, is it not soil and core of most exploitative systems, old and new? Does it not constitute one main root of the capitalist system?

We can put Tiep Hien in league with *radical* and *deep* ecology streams that raise the question: “Are we, the humans, the top of a power hierarchy in the biosphere?” We surely have some abilities more than the whales. However, whales too have many abilities more than us! Moreover, should we at all have a ‘might is right’ hierarchy based on such ‘abilities’? Alternatively, should we not apply the principle that each human has the same worth as any other— each animal too? Can we claim that this world belongs more to ‘us’ than some *others*? What will happen if our greater destructive ability and greed cannot be overcome with deeper ethics?

In the view of Tiep-Hien, Nature and humans are deeply connected, in *interbeing*. Thus, Tiep Hien offer a broad window for looking at the tradition of resistance. This has a rich ecological sensibility and compassionate living not as an afterthought, but something built into its core. Regrettably, we have not been able to fully explore this sphere in this write-up, due to our own limitations.

Look at another attempt to broaden Marxism on this issue – *compassion for the voiceless*.

“Among the ‘entities that have no voice’ to speak out are Nature, future generations, species of plants and animals and human-civilisation-in-general. Conditions now exist that can destroy all these entities. Such destruction would also mean the extinction of Life. Homo Sapiens’s imperialist tendency has put all life on Earth in danger, ... destroying our natural support system...” (As this consciousness has not arisen from within the proletarian movement, we must learn from the ecology movement.). -M.NADARAJAH, in, Culture, Gender and Ecology, p.140.

AN INDIAN EXAMPLE

It is not that we did not hear of this before. The streams of compassion and sensitivity for animals and humans often got split and put to war by traditions of Domination (Footnote – 11, given in the end).

Let us see what happened in India. There were large streams, which were offshoots of orthodox hinduism and were sensitive towards animals. They took a stand against *animal sacrifice*. But the bad leaderships got the issues right! These were mostly streams of brahmins — the overall voice of casteist hinduism, the protectors of the mother cow. Then there were the mercantile communities like jains and marwaries who too were preaching compassion for animals (‘even’ insects) and vegetarianism, but had no restriction on exploiting the oppressed. As the oppressed said, “They preach against spilling the blood of insects but drink our (human) blood”! On the other side, the exploited, the toiling people were mostly animal eaters. However, there have

also been many rebel socio-spiritual movements amongst the toilers that opposed violence against animals to a large extent.

Hindu fundamentalists, brahmins and mercantile capitalists had taken up the issue of “ban against cow slaughter”(but nowhere against slaughter of the black sister of the cow – the buffalo, or chicken, or any other that was favourite food of the hindus). In the last hundred years we can see that this was mostly to offer an engineered voice, to pit the oppressed within hindus against the muslims. All these above reasons created a reaction within the Marxists and many socialists in India. So for the Marxists not eating animals was associated with the political rightwing and hindu communalism. Marxism was already deaf to the cry of animals. (Footnote – 12, given in the end of Part-C) The above conflict further blocked the Marxists towards animal sensitivity. Their insensitivity blinded themselves from seeing that the stand of brahmins against’ animal killing was a farce. Within many traditions of brahmanism, animals were getting slaughtered for religious sacrifices. Most brahmins did not eat animals but why? Was this their sensitivity towards animals, or that they saw the blood of pigs and goats to be impure? After all, anything that was less pure than a brahmin’s blood was forbidden and considered as untouchable for them.

WE CAN ASK, ‘WHY THE COLLECTIVE STRUGGLES OF THE EXPLOITED, EVEN THE LARGEST, HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO LEAD TO LIBERATION?’

The system of exploitation of the working class for instance is not just a structure’. This structure is deriving strength from the tradition of accumulation and ‘up-climbing’, exploitation and hierarchy everywhere, both inside and outside the working class. It is a vast interconnected and malignant *Desert* we are fighting against. *Compassion, understanding and practice can nourish the Spring within the Desert only when it can overcome the egotism and competition between sister liberation streams and initiatives. Thus, besides giving respect to each life and each life’s right to live and be free, we need to take a special stand for the bottommost in order to overcome the Desert. This Desert can only be cornered with the extensive and deep ethical sensibility and principle of opposing up-climbing, giving priority for those who suffer more. Without such a deep spiritual rebellion, we cannot build non-opportunistic and broad coalitions, and go far in opposing our own egotism.* Thus, how we feel about the bottom-most, ‘even’ animals, insects and plants... is crucial.

END OF APPENDIX-C (OUR REFLECTIONS)

FOOTNOTES FOR PART 'C' (GIVEN IN THE END)

1. Gandhi used to often say, “All my strength comes from my faith (in God)”. To this, Gora, the founder of *rationalist movement* in India and ardent follower of Gandhi, used to respond, “All my strength comes from my faith that there is no God and I have to stand on my own.”

2. Domination relentlessly imposes its blueprint that is organised to cramp and mutilate our transaction of sharing and support in personal life, our necessity for nurture, joy, and sexuality. These blueprints are the patriarchal family, ‘blood’ relationships, caste, religious community and so on. These intersect with those imposed by State, its sectarian divisions and engineering of our togetherness as its political / administrative boundaries, nations, countries, and governments.

3. How deep is the interbeing of our human eco-system, how much our potentialities depends on society for our growth is illustrated by our crucial need for all kinds of socializing events and spaces, rituals, codes and conventions. However, such potentialities can be moulded in any shape, given any meaning. Thus, these capacities, needs, and spaces are captured by patriarchy/organized religion/Domination of all types. They impose rituals for birth, death, togetherness, collective joy and mourning, validations that engineer us into vertical and sectarian control. On the other side, we can see streams that subvert and reclaim these.

4. This is another site of our wonderful and deep capacities those are seized, mostly by organized religion. They use these to impose their Domination and Hierarchy over us.

5. We again note, opposing exploitation, material and social deprivation is also the fountainhead of major streams of idealism, meaning and spirituality. Where such deprivation is more intense, the necessity for opposing it also becomes more urgent.

6. By saying that ‘I want to live a life of worth and meaning’, I want to be authentic and committed’, we do not mean that this pining in every person is at the same level or intensity. The intensity is situational, circumstantial, dependent on times, experience... varying in different moments. Such drives may take some towards the struggle for counter-Domination, some may just keep longing to do something beautiful, some might become cynical, some might compromise or become immune or indifferent, whereas some others may get caught into the traps of Domination, even get caught into its power games!

7. Thus, in Asia as the ‘individual’ was not given much space to grow. Hence here, the coercive power and organs of State (that would be needed to suppress the individual) was also less compared to Europe. This might have been one of the reasons that the tiny but strong European States, so easily could kick around and colonize the vastly larger Asia, that had comparatively weaker States and also less of individuals’.

8. These traditions of *vertical spirituality* are mostly a part of the Establishment, its order, normalcy and market. But, due to the utter failure of the old ideologies of

emancipation, vertical spirituality is even giving leadership to resistance today. See for example, role of the Islamic fundamentalism in struggling against imperialism in the Arab world. Then, in an ironic reversal of roles, the Chinese Communist Party State' faces its first serious challenge from the Falun-Gong, a cocktail Buddhist, Guru' based organisation that is fighting for its democratic rights.

9. While reflecting on this part, a friend said, "K. uncle and Baby died a few years ago. But have they, as streams, alive and flowing through our social mind ended? Their memories, his quest, his dilemmas, his laughter, his despair. Her spontaneity, her friendship, her vitality, her agony/suffering, her victimization... Their nostalgia, warmth, smell ... is so alive, so vibrant, like an aroma in the air.

And these streams respond with such sentiency and sensitivity to us, our despair, our creativity also today. Are these streams not conscious, an entity in themselves?

Then ... sometimes, living for a while outside our awareness, these streams emerge gushing again; changed in strange ways; affecting us differently. Touching the cords of our life, these streams co-live with us while giving us hope/despondency, spiritual strength from deep within. Can we call them, streams with a 'sub-conscious'?

We may float here or there, go into feeling-dead patches, but the streams of K. uncle, Baby ... are sturdy and persistent; they keep whispering and touching us on and on. Patient and strong, these streams have a rugged autonomy.

There are countless such streams, experiences, memories, nostalgias that are always relating with, forming and getting shaped by our sub-conscious, our conscious, our spontaneous' mind. These streams have a life of their own. We can touch, share, and live with them as much as we believe, imagine and call upon them. These streams also have their self-worth; the lesser we trust them, the further they get away from us. Yet they remain around us (also in our unconscious and social mind), to welcome our call.

These streams holding our hands merge into the deep ocean (the collective unconscious). There we meet together, as currents, touching and influencing, as connected ripples.

10. Any radical philosophy or thought has to be the secretion of the life and struggle of the oppressed or for supporting them. Here in this writing we are trying to perceive how Domination oppresses each one of us in moments and situations, which might be in micro or larger levels. Here, oppression can be at the level of individual, relationships, social categories – classes and communities. It can also be broader and invisible, afflicting all living beings, biosphere and Nature. Most of time oppressed categories are situated hierarchically, some being more oppressed and some less. Many a time they cannot be compared. Nevertheless, these categories are always deeply related, too often in ways that cannot be seen and imagined.

11. Almost all religions of the world give humans the highest worth and power over 'lesser' beings. God, who is the supreme and total power, is always in the image of a human, and that too a man. We surrender to Him and utilise the lesser beings, internalising our powerfulness, we legitimise the homocentric value system.

12. Marxism emerging from the west, was not free, but was affected by the tradition of the Christian collective unconscious that even denies to animals, insects, plants the status of a being with a soul, where anyone but a Man and a Woman (his subordinate) are referred to as *it* – a thing.

ORIGINAL TEXT - PART- D

PRECEPTS CEREMONY

Today I have been asked by the community to recite the Precepts. I ask the community for spiritual support. Please, brothers and sisters, listen.

The precepts of the Order of Interbeing are the very essence of the Order of Interbeing. They are the torch lighting our path, the boat carrying us, the teacher guiding us. I ask the community to listen with a serene mind.

Consider the precepts as a clear mirror in which to look at ourselves. Say yes, silently, every time you see that during the past week you have made an effort to learn, practice, and observe the precept read.

(One bell sound)

Sisters and brothers are you ready?

Everyone (silently): I am ready.

These then are the precepts of the Order of Interbeing.

FIRST

Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones

All systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth.

(Silence)

This is the first precept of the order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practised and observed it during the past week? (Bell)

SECOND

Do not think the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth.

Avoid being narrow minded and bound to present views.

Learn and practice non-attachment from views

in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints.

Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge.

Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times

(Silence)

This is the second precept of the Order of Interbeing. Have you studied, practised and observed it during the past week?

(Bell) –

see in **APPENDIX-D;**

OUR REFLECTION on the FIRST AND SECOND SUTRA -D-1&2

Opening the Doors of our Empathy– Striving Against Mine Is 'The Truth' Tradition

[[Since the end ritual after each precept is the same, we will not repeat it any more.]]

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THIRD

Do not force others,
including children,
by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views,
whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda or even education
However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism
and narrowness.

.... ..

D-3 - REFLECTION ON THIRD SUTRA

**Moving away from 'GPCR' (Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution) of China:
*Fostering and gathering the seeds of counter domination***

FOURTH:

Do not avoid contact with Suffering
or close your eyes before Suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence
of Suffering in the life of the world.
Find ways to be with those who are suffering by all means, including
personal contact and visits, images, sound.
By such means, awaken yourself and others to the reality of Suffering in the
world

... ..

OUR REFLECTION on the FOURTH SUTRA – D-4

**Traversing through the hurdles of suffering:
*Deserts, meadows, alienation and co-paining***

FIFTH:

Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry.
Do not take as the aim of your life fame, profit, wealth or sensual pleasure.
Live simply and share time, energy and material resources with those who
are in need. ...

OUR REFLECTION on the FIFTH SUTRA – D-5:

**Against Accumulation – by the System
And Ours Too
*Engaging with suffering and exploitation
Rebellion against its seeds***

SIXTH:

Do not maintain anger or hatred.
As soon as anger and hatred arise,
Practice the meditation of compassion
in order to deeply understand

the persons who have caused anger and hatred, learning to look at other beings with the eyes of compassion.

OUR REFLECTION on the SIXTH SUTRA – D-6

A broken bridge: conflict and fracture amongst streams of spirituality and revolt

Can We Bridge Outrage, Rebellion And Love

SEVENTH:

Do not lose yourself in dispersion and in your surroundings.

Learn to practice breathing in order to regain composure of body and mind,
to practice mindfulness

and to develop concentration and understanding.

...

OUR REFLECTION on the SEVENTH SUTRA – D-7

The coming together of sand, mud, and stone:

The standing pillar, distinctive yet merged into the whole

(from the coming together of collectivity and individuality to the surfacing of interdependence) P.

EIGHTH:

Do not utter words that can create discord and cause the community to break.

Make every effort to reconcile and resolve all conflict, however small.

...

NINTH:

Do not say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people.

Do not utter words that cause division and hatred. Do not spread news that you do not know to be certain.

Do not criticise or condemn things that you are not sure of. Always speak truthfully and constructively.

Have the courage to speak out about situations of injustice, Even when doing so may threaten your own safety.

OUR REFLECTION on the EIGHTH & NINTH SUTRA – D-8 & 9

the bells chime to resonate with the song of a vibrant eco-system

Appeal for empathetic communication inside the world of emancipation

TENTH:

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Do not use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit,
or transform your community into a political party.

A religious community, however, should take a clear stand against
oppression and injustice
and should strive to change the situation
without engaging in partisan conflicts.

OUR REFLECTION on the TENTH SUTRA – D-10

Rebellion Against Domination

Also Against its Rules of the Game;

Striving to resist any type of personal or organisational power

ELEVENTH:

Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and Nature.

Do not invest in companies that deprive others of their chance to live.

Select a vocation, which helps to realise your ideal of compassion

...

TWELFTH

Do not kill.

Do not let others kill.

Find whatever means possible to protect life and to prevent war... ..

OUR REFLECTION on the TWELFTH SUTRA– D-12

Preserving the sanctity of life: a struggle against war and its roots p.

THIRTEENTH:

Posses nothing that should belong to others. Respect the property of others,
but prevent others from enriching themselves from human Suffering or the
Suffering of other beings.

OUR REFLECTION on THIRTEENTH SUTRA – D-13

**Call for struggle to uproot Exploitation of all beings, based on a mindful
recognition of our inner proclivities towards exploitation p.**

FOURTEENTH:

Do not mistreat your body. Learn to handle it with respect. Do not look on
your body as only an instrument.

Preserve vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realisation of the Way.

Sexual expression should not happen without love and commitment.

In sexual relationships, be aware of future Suffering that may be caused.

To preserve the happiness of others, respect the rights and commitments of
others.

Be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world,
meditate on the world into which you are bringing new beings -----

OUR REFLECTION on the FOURTEENTH SUTRA – D-14

On ethics of personal life, relationships, pleasure, support systems and Organisational traditions

Brothers and sisters, I have recited the precepts as the community has wished. I thank all my brothers and sisters for helping me do it serenely.

Please join your palms and recite each line of the closing chant after me:

Reciting the sutras, practising the way of awareness

Gives rise to benefits without limit.

I vow to share the fruits with all beings.

I vow to offer tribute to parents, teachers, friends, and numerous beings – who give guidance and support along the path.

OUR REFLECTION ON THE FIRST AND SECOND SUTRA -D-1&2

Opening the Doors of our Empathy – Striving Against, "My Tradition Is 'The Truth' "

Programs of socialist, Marxist, 'lower castes' /dalit, adivasi and other organized streams of emancipation usually begin with a declaration about the enemy that is considered to be *outside* the people. Seen from such traditions, Tiep Hien certainly begin their sutras in a most unusual way. They call for the need for sceptical scrutiny, to introspect and strive to see limitations of radical traditions and theory, beginning with their own. They believed that they must do this in the very first sutra, even while calling to struggle against such a virulent and total imperialist war.

AFTER THE 60s, THE WALLS CREATED BY THE OLD FAITHS AND BELIEFS BROKE, PARTICULARLY IN OUR MARXIST STREAMS

Then, our eyes opened up to see a deluge of social movements, initiatives and currents – visible and invisible. A galaxy of emancipatory terrains unfolded before us in addition to our old ones. Some of these were women against patriarchy, paternalism; dalits against caste hierarchy, black people against racism; environmental and ecology movements of adivasi, peasants and others against the centralist Development model – particularly in the post-colonies; the movements against authoritarianism, militarism, national chauvinism.

These movements were happening all over the world. They had risen to a crescendo in Europe since 60s. There, all kinds of revolts, of the people of streets, prison, schools, asylums, gays, lesbians and so on were exposing the pathology and dictatorship of 'normalcy' and 'merit'/'fitness' in our social life.

We also started seeing the ocean of *informal* compassion, mutual-aid and resistance against Domination.

In the field of theorisation, our time honoured rigid and simple systems were being overrun. Each social rebellion of a new type was throwing a searchlight of different colour on the innards of Domination. They were telling the bookkeeper's (theory writers) to add new chapters, new insights to radical theory. From anti-Establishment currents in Buddhism, psychoanalyses to post-structuralism, all were adding rich insights to our old Marxism, Gandhian socialism and so on. Theory was becoming more humble, subtle, capable of seeing the invisible processes and connections, many dimensional, with better understanding of *hegemony* – the *seed and soil* of Domination and egotism within the oppressed.

Some responded in the old way. They said, "In the old era we did not know enough, or something was wrong with our Theory. So there were blunders. Let us *now* assemble the 'correct revolutionary theory' by including all these new dimensions and insights."

**TIEP-HIEN'S RESPONSE TO THIS IS,
"THE ROOT PROBLEM IS NOT JUST OUR IGNORANCE OR WRONG UNDERSTANDINGS"**

They consider this *root problem* to be more due to our inner *block*, induced by insecurity, egotism and attachment. Emancipatory theory can flourish only with empathy and opening up, sharing feelings, witnessing our *fall* too, practicing and learning along with analysing. Our inner blocks, getting anchored to fixed beliefs and authority, makes the work of theorisation become like defending a fortress, in war with rival and 'wrong' theories. This whips up intense passions and self-righteousness around 'our correct theory/authority'. Our ignorance and wrong understanding does add to this problem. But it is more the other way round. This *root* problem (of inner block) creates much of our ignorance and wrong understanding. It prevents us from learning and changing. The moment we believe that we have arrived at the 'correct' theory, our egotism gets the opportunity to attach itself to this faith. Then, Our 'correct' theory gets blinkered and distorted from its journey towards better understanding. This is a catch-22. Too often, our 'theoreticians' and we the 'vanguards' are the last to learn.

These *blocks* and negative streams strengthen themselves by connecting the *outer* streams of Domination to the *inner* process of egotism/hegemony. These also thrive by fracturing the positive *interbeing* of the streams of *inner* change with the *outer*.

Our tiep hien respond to this problem by giving priority to the work of healing and tightly connecting positive currents of *inner* and *outer* change. A common thread running through all their sutras is recognition of the need to overcome this particular fracture and negative *interbeing*.

For them, a central mode of any particular dimension of Domination is rooted in a subtle process, the corresponding tradition of hegemony within us, wherein one begins to emulate, as well as surrender to the imposed *authority* and its *Truth* – of any colour and shape, even emancipatory.

Are not this kind of imposition, and also the construction of insecurity, egotism, and worship around authority and its Truth, a central tradition of Domination? As we rebel against Domination in *outer* society should we not resist its *seeds and soil*, such emulation and surrender to authoritarianism inside us, our world of resistance? This positive *interbeing* of resistance to authoritarianism in both the *inner* and *outer* aspects is a core of tiep hien.

Similarly, consider the third sutra. Tiep Hien oppose Domination as the system of *expansionism* and *imposition*. Hence, they also call for a struggle against its seeds, emulating this mode of Domination, its absurdity and its consequences inside us.

Talking about Paradigm Shift

Thus, Tiep Hien is not giving a new solution, a new philosophy. Rather, they are focusing on our traditional mindset or attitude towards 'solutions' and 'philosophy'. It is different from the innumerable ways in which paradigms similar to *interbeing* have been expressed and *paradigm shifts* organised, particularly since 60s.

We give some examples of such paradigm shifts from fields as diverse as Marxism and socially concerned religions. As a contrast, we also give some Buddhist paradigm that is much older.

IN MARXISM

In Marxism, since the experience of the failures of the 20s, rebel currents have been working against the mechanical, compartmentalised, hierarchical paradigms of 'official Marxism'. Fluid, subtle, many dimensional, interwoven views of reality – similar to the *interbeing* outlook were coming up. They became so popular in 60s that even many 'official' streams of Marxism in Europe felt it 'practical' to become open to them!

Consider the work of Althusser, who was a leading theoretician of the Communist Party of France. (The Statist and pro-establishment stance of this Party was dramatically highlighted during the revolts of the 60s, when it mobilised its trade union force, along with the police, to suppress the revolutionaries.) He and others, in 60s introduced the concept of *overdetermination* in Marxism that means something quite similar to *interbeing*. Let us look at one contemporary recap of such work in Calcutta.

"They ('Rethinking Marxism' group, Farad, Resnick and Woolf) look at social processes — as belonging to three distinct categories: the 'economic' — production, distribution and appropriation of the products of surplus labour; the 'political' — the workings of power relations; the 'ideational' — the production, distribution and consumption of meanings. These categories as all the social processes are overdetermined; that is, all these processes (in all their dimensions) and categories (as meanings) constitute each other, literally bring each other into existence (none being primary). ... For effective theorisation, some entry point has to be fixed. ... For Marxian theory (this entry point) is postulated to be class ... in economy...."

Even: "Each person can be thought of as an unique site, a special cross-section of particular biological, cultural, political, economic and psychological processes." (Quoted from Anirban Das in 'Margins, 'of Knowledge, Body and Gender'– Calcutta, 2002.)

LOOK AT ANOTHER EXAMPLE

FROM A VERY DIFFERENT TERRAIN, OF SPIRITUAL ECOLOGY THAT IS ASSOCIATED WITH FAITH IN GOD

Look at this *ecological world-view* by concerned Christian theologians:

Process theory (of Alfred North Whitehead) asserts:

... "process is fundamental." Thus this is "an 'ecological' theory of internal relations in which entities are qualitatively changed in interactions — for (as different from) the 'billiard ball model' in which

entities are like machines — independent and unchanged, affecting each other only through external relations.

Thus (1) its proponents recognise the "interconnections among things, specifically between organisms and their total environments." And (2) it implies "respect or even reverence for, and perhaps a feeling of kinship with, the other creatures."

Thus ecological ethic, social justice and ecological sustainability is implied as: "the whole of nature participates in us and we in it. We are diminished not only by the misery of the Indian peasants but also by the slaughter of whales ... (or) ... imposition of the temperate zone technology onto tropical agriculture (that) turns grasslands into deserts that will support neither human nor animal life."

—Cobb (centre for Process Studies)

Quoted in *Radical Ecology — the search for a Liveable World: — Carolyn Merchant in the series; Revolutionary Thought/ Radical movements'* — series editor — Gottlieb —1992.

LASTLY, LET US LOOK AT A PEN-SKETCH OF A CONTEMPORARY 'ENGAGED BUDDHIST' READING OF MAHAYANA:

"The Mahayana approach is quite different from the path of attaining merit through service to others (as in Theravada tradition). The salient principles for the Mahayana tradition are emptiness, interdependence and egolessness, although Theravada ethics also rely on the non-egocentric nature of altruistic social action. Broadly, the teaching of emptiness discredits ideologically based actions, especially coercive action; interdependence stresses our interconnection and identification with all forms of nature; and finally egolessness and nonattachment mandates creative engagement with those others to whom we are so interconnected. In fact, from the Mahayana perspective, interdependence is the very essence of reality, so that one cannot coherently draw a rigid distinction between the state of nirvana and the world of suffering (samsara). Since nirvana and samsara are interdependent, two sides of the same reality, one cannot leave samsara by going to nirvana. Hence, non-engagement with the world is simply not an option for the enlightened. Thus, not only must we have concern for fellow humans but the non-human world including the natural environment as well. In this view, any form of dominance, manipulation, coercion or even outright neglect is a symptom of egocentric attachment and a product of desire. In a sense, one is enjoined from doing anything but good works as these

represent only alternative for selfless living. Good Buddhists do not behave compassionately because it is the right thing to do or because they will acquire merit toward nirvana; rather good Buddhists cannot but be compassionate.”

– In, ‘The review of Politics’ – vol.59, no.3 – P.613-618 –1997. From: Review by Michael G. Barnhart of: *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* – Edited by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King – N.Y., State University of NY, 1996.

THUS, A WHOLE LOT OF PARADIGM SHIFT HAPPENED IN 60s AND AFTER IN RADICAL PHILOSOPHY, AS HAD HAPPENED EARLIER TOO

Some were sensitive to one kind of oppression and some towards another. These philosophies had similarity with some classic Buddhist/Taoist streams, those who believed in the concept of non-being of any particular *essence*, as each entity is created and continually formed by all the other entities, deep interdependence of everything, egolessness and non-attachment – in *interbeing*.

PROBLEM WITH AN UNIQUE OR ONE EXCLUSIVE SET OF PARADIGM

We can see that each of these paradigms, classical or ‘shifted’, have some specific strengths and weaknesses, whether they were materialistic (like Marxism or many streams of Buddhism) or associated with God.

The paradigm /point of view specific to just one kind of victim throw a sharp spotlight on that particular dimension of Domination/Hierarchy. Consider for instance the economic /political /cultural processes around exploitation of toilers (as seen from their point of view) or women or dalits or the biosphere and so on. But this way of looking, based upon a single specific paradigm, suffers the weakness of getting into the vicious circle of one-sidedness and conflict (with other specific paradigms).

On the other side, the *universalistic* paradigms, emphasising love, compassion, dignity for all, are generally associated with religion. They are good for supporting our activism driven by *common compassion*. Similarly we have the paradigm of *deep ecology* pointing out the need to live and act to protect the sustainable ecology of the whole earth. (Footnote – 1, given in the end of Part – D/End) However, they are poor in lighting up and engaging with suffering associated with specific modes of exploitation. Their beautiful holism does not save them from getting contaminated with one-sidedness and problems associated with the ‘we are the best’ mindset.

As in the past and also recently since 60s in Europe, many schools have been thinking of how to get out of such problems. These schools have been questioning the linear and “ours is the best” way of thinking. The pervasive nature of this problem is astounding.

Thus, since more than two thousand years ago, many streams in Buddhism (particularly in many Zen streams) declared, “Attachment to ideas about truth, philosophy and theory, can become the worst obstacle to understanding”.

Since 60s and after, schools like existentialism, post-structuralism said, “We must go beyond this situation, *problematise* it (that is question and look into both the positive and negative aspects of streams locked in conflict).” Further continuing this tradition, few other schools have been critiquing the belief in the existence of global and universal theories and truths. Nevertheless, whether it is old Buddhism, radical Zen, or the recent Western philosophies, the results have been unsatisfactory. Ironically, most of these realisations, after a phase of openness, led to the creation of a new paradigm and also the consequent adherence (as an anchor), lobbies and clash. These push these tendencies into the same whirlpool of old sectarianism of *ours* vs. the *other!*

How to avoid traps of *paradigm-centrism*?

Can we solve this problem by creating some new wisdom; a new paradigm or some more shifts?

We might simply say, as in many streams of Buddhism, “All paradigms are *nothing* (non-being)”. But then, we can sink into some omnipresent, uniform cosmic soup, that is uniform everywhere, without any level, structure or variation, where all patterns, forms or direction become utterly vague. Here, we cannot take side of the oppressed (because there is no structured category and *side* in this infinite ocean), and act. In addition, doesn't this *non-being of all paradigms* often become a new paradigm-centrism? How do Tiep Hien deal with this problem?

OUR tiep hien DO NOT CLAIM TO OFFER SOME NEW PARADIGM

Instead of some more *paradigm shift*, tiep hien offer the realisation of *positive interbeing* of the world of emancipatory paradigms — old and shifted. They say, “There are some positive and negative currents in all paradigms (concerned with social emancipation)”.

However, tiep hien do not want to just add together the positive aspects in these paradigms in order to create “the best synthesis — a new paradigm”. They see all emancipatory paradigms as an ecosystem. Hence, instead of a single and unique principle, we have an unimaginably large number of partial, one-sided, positive and negative streams and paradigms, jostling and creating each other.

Here, they appeal for tiep — which is to feel, recognise and nurture the positive currents / patterns /connections in each. These currents, they say, are always connected *per-se*, visibly and invisibly, however feebly, and enhancing each other. Their appeal is to become the *Sihaya*, which is to become conscious of and nurture this *Spring in the Desert*.

In order become the *Sihaya*, we have to keep encountering the space of emptiness. This is not some esoteric meditation. It is simply witnessing and acting, understanding and striving to reduce dependence on our anchors (attachment with paths and paradigms, reason or faith...). This will help us to realise their specific insights and limitations. This path is the gateway to learn about our inter-relatedness. Evolving with emptiness is not a journey of aloneness but a path of connectedness.

Tiep Hien also appeal for Hien, "Do not get entangled in *ideas*, even those of making new paradigm. But, always try to engage with suffering around. Always stand against the roots and seeds of suffering and also against egotism and its roots."

Hence Tiep Hien are not offering a new paradigm for the old, but are asking for a departure from the usual convention of paradigm shift, and then something more.

HAVE WE NOT HEARD OUR GRANDFATHERS SAYING SIMILAR THINGS LIKE LEARNING FROM THE POSITIVE SIDES OF DIFFERENT SCHOOLS?

For us, tiep hien are not the representatives of some brilliant intellect or high philosophy. They are present everywhere. They are the currents of striving to empathise, open our minds to the declarations and whisperings of the compassionate and rebel streams, whether visible or not, all around. They appeal to do our bit to live, connect and nurture these streams.

D-3 - REFLECTION ON THIRD SUTRA

Moving away from 'GPCR' (Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution) of China:

Fostering and gathering the seeds of counter-Domination

Egalitarian Cultural (Spiritual) Rebellion - II

What happens when compassion is cut off from understanding, when we strive for inner change using the war model, seeing the enemy as 'something' 'out there'?

OFFICIAL (STATE POWER ASSOCIATED) MARXIST TRADITIONS FACE THE PROBLEM OF POWER POLLUTION

The earlier Marxist logic was, "The root of all evil is in the system of private property and power of the exploiting/ruling classes --- 'out there'." Even most streams in our old anti-colonial movement (leaving aside many Gandhians) believed; "overthrowing the oppressors (imperialists 'out there'), by whatever means, would liberate the society".

However, by the 50s we could no more deny the degeneration of most revolutions that had made *outer*-change their centre. *It was clear that the soil and seed of Domination could survive and thrive despite the fact that we overthrew the present group of oppressors outside.*

A revolution in the *inner*, the sphere of culture, values, personal and social life was thus realised to be necessary even in Marxist tradition. At such a time in 60s, the GPCR ('Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution') in China made the loudest attempt in the world to solve these problems of ethical and social degeneration and pollution of power within. It galvanised hope in anti-establishment Marxists. Even egalitarians and humanists far from the Marxist tradition, including many Gandhians, believed that the solution had finally arrived.

THE PROBLEM IN THE SOIL

Unfortunately, the tradition that organised GPCR did not understand the 'seeds and soil' of power pollution, within the people and within the 'activists'.

For thousands of years, the medieval traditions of Domination (particularly in Asia) had perfected a system of rule that needed a minimum of overt and central force and violence. Our human spirit (compassion and understanding for ourselves, our community and others), our positive ego, needs room to grow. But the social, economic and political coercion and exploitation by Domination in the *outer* social space would constantly crush this spirit. In the *inner* spaces too, right from our very childhood, our positive ego would be cramped and suffocated by the 'norm', the conservative and paternalistic *soil of family, community, religion, education and culture, even in the space of emancipatory organising*. This would suffocate our *compassion, understanding and ability to act on our own and introspect critically*. Such *walling in* would strive to keep our positive cultural (spiritual) streams buried in conformism and egotism. This was even more suffocating within the lower middle classes. This *guardianism* created an extreme *need (within us) for some vertical power, some authority, tradition, faith and norm in order to do anything*. Respect for individuality, our own and that of others around, for our friendships, relationships and mutuality would be de-valued and broken relentlessly whenever they defied the 'norm'. We got little space to grow as individuals; to stand alone or grow with our horizontal relationships (within the same class or social level) outside the world dictated by 'sanctioned', 'norm' or 'proper authority'. We did not learn to introspect, be able to face our guilt and our *fall*. We were not oriented to take our appropriate share of responsibility for our mistakes. Therefore, for any setback, we got habituated to blame some 'other', super-villains and 'bad authorities'.

This *soil* kept on reproducing Domination and servility. Like a pair of escalators, this hierarchy kept on proliferating, from top to bottom and then bottom to top. Thereby all social inequalities fed upon each other like a production line going up and down!

HOW 'OFFICIAL' (STATE POWER ASSOCIATED) MARXISM SEES THE PROBLEM?

This Marxism sees the problem of pollution of power and egotism as a disease rooted in the bourgeoisie. It sees the problem as primarily due to the economics of private and class ownership, its expansionism and competition, and the State organized by it. Thus, the egotism of the petty-bourgeoisie, peasants or shopkeeper was seen to be rooted in the little property they possessed. Surely, this is true, but is this the whole story? How can this explain, from where, from which *material / economic basis*, work experience do the egotism of the proletariat (who do not have private property/power and also not forced to compete, accumulate and expand as a part of their work-life) originate? Official Marxism mostly explains this as being due to the *bourgeois and petty-bourgeois influence* from outside and above, *the germ of the disease*, contaminating the good proletariat. But then, how does it enter even the body of the conscious proletarian organisation and their struggle? The understanding of the processes of subconscious, the subtler aspects of hegemony, its nuances, invisibility, indoctrination that can subvert the 'correct leadership' relentlessly, are more or less absent in this model.

Official Marxists do see one crucial (economic) dimension of the problem. Ironically, the dazzling power of this understanding blinds them to the innumerable other dimensions. This one sided 'eye' then begins to think only in terms of simplistic models and cures.

Thus, the Chinese communists saw the problem as, "Some of the *petty bourgeois* within the Party easily become the *agents of the bourgeoisie, the carriers of the capitalist vices.*" Therefore GPCR saw the solution to be, "We the correct communists must overthrow and purge 'them' the 'bad communists', the 'enemy' within, the 'germs', *the so called 'capitalist-roaders'*. We must thus engineer *inner change.*"

NOW, COMING TO GPCR, WHAT REALLY HAPPENED?

Thus the Marxist (Maoist) tradition **sought to bring about positive *inner change*, but using the mindset and model of war, 'us against them'**. Earlier the paradigm was to defeat the enemy outside. Now it was, "Smash all enemies inside" (but these 'enemies inside' were in actuality the enemies who always remained outside of the 'correct leadership'). It was a dedicated and merciless campaign. It went via labelling the 'enemies', defeating, breaking and 're-educating' them through indoctrination, guilt, shame and exposure. It was in effect, a relentless use of force against 'others'.

The 'cultural revolutionaries' desired to foster a movement of genuine egalitarianism, ethics and compassion. But in their passion to *engineer it*, the GPCR ironically converted itself into an authoritative and despotic regime, a culture of witch-hunting and fear. Within this, a person's loyalty to communist ethics often became equivalent to denouncing and exposing *others* – perceived as enemies, who might be one's companions, parents, teachers, friends and comrades. Another aspect of this was to subjugate, 'persuade', usually with force, persons perceived as enemies to ceaselessly confessing one's "counter-revolutionary" aspirations.

Tragically, in the heat of fighting the 'enemy inside' (the 'capitalist-roaders') GPCR somewhere forgot the need for fighting the tradition of conformism, transforming the *soil* of the rot, the vulnerability of the masses, their tradition of authority-worship, servility and so on. The need for creating freedom, autonomous space for the people to grow, to stand on their own, to build up their criticality got hidden and crushed under the weight of revolutionary zeal and infighting. Rather the activists were conditioned to think, "Our freedom (for us the vanguards) to overthrow 'bad authorities', means freedom for the people", and "criticality, and maturity means ability to follow the correct authority, whom everyone around is following".

They never asked, "Why the people of China do not have the right to organise, or even publish anything independent of the Party-State, without its permission?" Or, "How can the toilers build up the habit to think for and empower themselves if they are always 'led', told what to do, and engineered?" Or, "Why the people of Tibet should not be allowed to take their own decision as to the type of system they want, or encouraged to create an independent egalitarian democracy, without being trampled around by the red army from China for strengthening the Chinese State?" Or "Can compassion be inspired in others by practising militancy, hatred and coercion?" Or, "What has compassion, even for those who are not 'supporters of the correct revolution' to do with revolution?"

In fact, such un-reflected practice easily gets caught in the negative currents that are the *seeds and soil* of Domination (egotism/hegemony/servility). These soil and seeds, which manipulate our subconscious, can easily express themselves as 'Cultural Revolution'. GPCR only re-created the *seeds and soil* where 'capitalist-roaders' kept on further sprouting! GPCR somehow managed to equate, in the minds of people, communism with authoritarian coercion, and the capitalist-road with freedom!

Thus, despite the best of motivations, GPCR quickly degenerated into faction fights for power, commandism and extremism. Paradoxically, the massive spiritual energy that was released led to an *implosion*, chaos, burnout and paralysis. Thus the entire movement has left us with a legacy of anger, guilt and betrayal, confusion, helplessness and demoralisation. *This ultimately led to almost a permanent and overwhelming victory of its anti-thesis – co-option into capitalism and nation Statism.* After the GPCR, China has remained under a brazen State-capitalist-Party dictatorship. It gives every freedom to the worst of multi-national-companies, commercial racketeers and mafias but brutally suppresses all opposition, egalitarian, Buddhist, even Marxist. *And, what is more frightening is the utter failure and paralyses of any democratic protest to all these, for the last three and a half decade.*

We mentioned earlier, how fracture of the *inner* from *outer* aspect within the tradition of change splits compassion from understanding (p.). The Chinese communists believed earlier (till the 40s and after), "Overthrowing a set of 'enemies outside' (Imperialists and their agents) would usher us in the path of true compassion and freedom". However, when they saw their 'failure' (in the 60s), they again convinced themselves that "the overthrowing of 'another set of enemies outside' (capitalist-roaders inside the Party) would clear the path for egalitarian society". Thus, their *pre-conceived ideas about compassion and freedom* blocked them from looking at the situation from a *free and compassion-based point of view!*

The Realisations of Tiep Hien

IT SEEMS THAT TIEP HIEN UNDERSTOOD FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF GPCR (AND ASIAN COMMUNISM) WHAT NOT TO DO, IN WHAT WAYS NOT TO OPPOSE POLLUTION OF POWER!

Let us examine their principle of opposing the use of "force, authority, threat, money, propaganda or even education" (third sutra) — all non-compassionate, authoritarian and hierarchical means of expansion — even for the 'correct' revolution.

IS THIS PRINCIPLE, UTOPIAN AND EXTREMIST? IS IT "TOO GOOD BUT IMPRACTICAL"?

For thousands of years, Domination, its *guardianism* and conformism have stifled *outer* and *inner* spaces (freedom) of the people. Domination became the guardian who would "instruct and build up", usurp and

organise, the people's strength of compassion, understanding and acting. One main method of *guardianism* and conformism has been to use social engineering – using "force, authority, threat, money, propaganda and education". Here, we must ask, "Can we bring freedom, build up strength for autonomous growth in others and us through more of such social engineering?" Rather, in such a situation, emancipation must mean helping people struggle to create un-engineered and free space for autonomous growth. This is needed more for the oppressed, children, the marginalized, meek and broken, all those who get even less space than others.

The lesson from history is quite clear. *If cultural rebellion (particularly in Asia) does not want to become 'extremist and utopian', if it wants to become 'realistic', it must strive to push back all types of authoritarian social engineering.* It must help to create nurturing space for a mind and relationship that can be more compassionate, free, introspective and capable of questioning and acting against all authorities and 'norms'. This must be done inside the family, community and school, factory or Government, in all sectors of the normal society, even inside the 'revolutionary party'. We must nurture the streams that build up dignity, autonomy and togetherness for one's own *self*, one's co-sufferers (which, for the economically exploited, Marxists call as *proletarian class awareness*), and also for every other type of sufferer.

TO UNDERSTAND THE INSIDIOUS AND PERVASIVE POWER OF THE STREAMS OF EGOTISM/ / DEPENDENCY / EXPANSIONISM, WE CAN ASK, "WHAT IS COMMON BETWEEN SUCH DIVERSE STREAMS OF THE ORGANISED SECTOR – FROM MARXISTS TO GANDHIANS?"

This can be said to be the faith that, "*Ours is the correct path. Therefore, the more influence and power we can have, the more emancipation we can make.*" Thus, the fundamental principle of all organising and 'isms' of liberation tend to become, "*Recruit and expand*". Gandhian socialists use 'ethical' means like, moral influence, power of the religious traditions, persuasion and pressure, respect and charisma, becoming Gurus and Babas, social force of the organisation, paternalistic education... They believe themselves to be free of such problems (of Power pollution). Thus, Gandhians would say,

"All these problems mentioned above are due to the creed of violence and centralism of the Marxists. Their western atheistic/materialist faith has made them blind to the inner voice, spirituality, humility and inner change, the correct path. We avoid the blind ally of the Marxists. Then, what is wrong in our using 'good' methods to educate the people, build up the truly moral and correct Path and society? Is our Path not against Centralist Development, the model of materialism, corruption and expansionism of western capitalism which is the root of all evils?"

THE THIRD SUTRA QUESTIONS THIS KIND OF EASY SOLUTIONS AND LEARNS FROM CO-OPTION AND FAILURE OF EVEN THOSE TRADITIONS THAT EMPHASISED UPON COMPASSION HUMILITY AND NON-ARROGANCE, LIKE THE BUDDHIST, THE GANDHIAN

The virus of egotism/dependency/expansionism spares none. Working via our sub-conscious, it can take any shape; formulate itself in any language however ethical or radical. It can even dress up as an anti-egotist and anti-meritocratic, anti-expansionist and anti-centralist revolution that emphasize upon inner change. Mere intentions and programs cannot stop this super-shape-changer! Currents of invisible egotism easily creep into

and flourish in our *striving to impose* even our best programs. These currents can infiltrate, mimic and hijack our most ethical commitments and drives. Ironically, the more passionately we are committed to emancipation, the easier it becomes for this Trojan virus of hegemony to subvert us!

Then, how we are to recognize these pathogens? How to deal with them?

Thus, these chameleon 'viruses' cannot be identified by their *appearance* as they are always wearing the mask painted with the best of our ideas, reason, ethics and faith. Fortunately, these viruses, like cancer or our own cells that have become malignant, have one *telltale* characteristic. It is in their mode of reproduction. "*Growing as fast as possible, and at any cost*", seems to be their main agenda. They grow by devouring the resources meant for others, the ordinary cells and all harmonious, co-operative processes, without any consideration for sharing. This leads to suffocation and wasting of the ordinary cells and the processes of health. Knowing this, many anti-cancer medicines find and select the pathogens by looking for entities with such abnormally fast growing, *expansionist* character. The third sutra can be seen here, in a similar way, as scrutinizing the mode of our expansion, and targeting each way of growing that is prone to malignancy.

THE THIRD SUTRA IS CERTAINLY NOT A VOW TO DO NOTHING!

It is a full-fledged call for activism. It is also simultaneously, a call for practice against seeds of malignant growths. It needs organically combining struggles for *inner change*, *sowing the good seeds*, along with *outer change*. This means learning from and nurturing all positive streams that are different from us. They may be organised. They are mostly informal and invisible. They strive to expand the space for compassion, understanding, practicing, sharing, friendship, autonomy, growth and self-criticality of the oppressed and even the meekest. It also means inter-connecting rebellions to extend democracy from below, to push back exploitation and oppression so as to create more such spaces for mutuality, empathy, freedom and growth.

Traversing through the hurdles of suffering:

Deserts, meadows, alienation and co-paining

*Here, we are discussing the politics and eco-system of the processes of engaging with suffering. We will concentrate **firstly** on compassion and then, in the **second** section, on pain and co-paining.*

Engaging with Suffering – 1

Examining a major fracture in the eco-system of compassion

To illustrate our approach, we will discuss the terrain of compassion as response to suffering as an eco-system with two realms or poles.

One ‘pole’ of this eco-system is the victim specific type of compassion-in-response.

This pole is constituted by the various paradigm, response and specific compassion/understanding/practice that emerge from struggles of different categories and communities of victims. Moreover, these are the victims who are large, and whose victimization is crucial for the existence of the system of Domination. That is, these victims have the capacity to challenge and create serious organized struggles against the system. Such victims are – workers, dalits/coloured, women, people in the post-colonies, periphery, margins and so on.

The view from this pole, of the people shackled under a specific mode of oppression would be, “The bulk of our suffering and the negative culture, ethics, ideology that perpetuates it comes from this specific system of exploitation. Our dignity, self-worth, material, social and spiritual power, independence and the ability to defend it has been smothered and crushed by Domination. How can we have *our world* without struggling for it? Can the system, whose very existence is determined by exploiting our resources and our being, give us our world?” Hence, compassion and engagement with suffering primarily will mean *struggle for self-emancipation* of that particular class of victims. For instance, Marxist socialist theory looks for a scientific strategy from the point of view of the exploited. They seek a method to overcome the specific Domination that is the root cause of most of their suffering. Here, the economically exploited as a group are believed to be potentially so strong (once organized) that they can challenge the system, mobilize themselves and then their struggle for self-emancipation will push back and finally destroy that particular Domination. This will not only reduce suffering of that specific category, but as the main pillar of Domination is broken, the whole of the system will fall apart and all kinds of sufferers will get emancipation.

The second ‘pole’ direct us to nurture the sufferer who is in a different situation from the nurturer.

surfacing

It calls to give priority to the one who is 'hindmost', the weakest, one who is least able even to struggle and help oneself.

Here a universalistic compassion engages with the sufferer, striving more for the one who is comparatively defenceless and lower down. It believes, "We must generate a cultural/social/ethical praxis that engages with suffering globally and gives priority to the hindmost. This principle will orient us to struggle against any suffering in ways that do not benefit just some but worsen the condition of some lower down. Keeping the person at the bottom always in mind will challenge us to find ways to strive that will reduce the whole system of hierarchy. This will stimulate the unleashing of the spiritual power of compassion in society. This will reduce and demolish all kinds of systems of insensitivity, inequality, exploitation, oppression and suffering."

In our 'eco-system of compassion / understanding / practice, both these 'poles' are essential and complimentary. The positive interbeing of these two poles is crucial for the health of emancipation.

Here, we will study their respective strengths and weaknesses. We will examine how their positive connection is necessary and they then can strive better against co-option. The problem is to study why they fracture; get into conflict and co-option into Domination.

We will first take a look at the kinds of compassion that emerge from struggles of specific category of victims. We examine the Marxist stream as its representative and organise our discussion around it.

Examining the 'golden principle' of the first pole: giving highest priority to the 'self-emancipation of the major community of the oppressed'

Here, the most central tradition has been Marxism. This is highly empathetic and compassionate towards the social, economic and political suffering of the economically exploited, the working class. This specific compassion is surely basic to understand and engage with the root of the largest complex of problems in the world. Marxism goes ahead and argues:

"We can prove scientifically that the working class is the most crucial and central 'hindmost' within the social hierarchy. It is the class basis on which the whole unjust political-economic system stands. Is not the exploitation of the workers the lifeblood of the primary body of Domination today? Hence, it is only this class that has the capacity – potentiality of awareness, self-organisation and the vantage position to challenge and overthrow capitalism. It is the basis of all systems of hierarchy in this age. Hence liberation of the working class, its 'leadership', entails liberation of all the oppressed in the society."

Later, the women, dalit, poor peasants of Third world ... all major categories of the oppressed, in a similar way showed that they were the real 'hindmost' (in the sense of being the most exploited and crucial basis of Domination). Each of them claimed that they were the bottom-most in the ladder and most capable of challenging and overthrowing the whole Establishment. Hence each of them argued, "we are at the bottom, and most crucial. So we should get the highest priority."

Our tiep hien must identify with Marxism (and each of the streams of victim's resistance). Our tiep hien would rather be saying, "*We stand with the exploited, the working classes and other categories of the oppressed and their self-emancipatory struggles to overcome. Each of the specific compassion/understanding/practice associated with their struggle is surely crucial. But, is it enough to engage with the whole of the insidious power of Domination?*"

Take for instance the struggle of the working class. Do they not need to strive against fragmentation and competition within? Do they not need to struggle against the culture of competition, economic and social hierarchy/hegemony/opportunism dividing the toilers and all other categories of the oppressed? The working class needs to create empathy for different sections of toilers and other kind of sufferers. How will they ever get connected, unless they strive to reduce their egotism (that mostly manifests itself in giving excessive importance to the mode of suffering of their particular section and a belief that one's struggle and Path is most important)? This is essential for the health of emancipatory eco-system.

There are so many different types and classes of experience of suffering, and also of mutuality, caring and resistance. All kind of barriers divide them. A core politics of Domination/ hegemony is to organise these different *barriers* in negative *interbeing*, in order to strengthen each other. Hence the crucial need is to open and develop our empathy and connection across different categories of the oppressed, the hierarchies dividing them. We need to break through the outer barriers (in society), our inner blocks and insensitivities, particularly within our movements.

For instance, insensitivity of the people as 'workers' towards people as women and patriarchy also closes the door for the worker's streams to receive a vital positive current against all egotism that is rooted in the specific tradition of patriarchy. In a similar way, insensitivity of women's movement towards the suffering of the workers or the 'disabled' or even a meek person closes the feminist stream from opening up to these vital positive currents. Further, any one-dimensional connection with suffering at a personal level, if it becomes obsessive, indifferent to others and then self-centred, can erode our very foundation. It can block us from seeing suffering at so many other levels of the society. This in all possibility will make our perception narrow and closed.

Marxism and many other streams of specific response to suffering have a similar block towards the suffering and compassion for most (non-human) living beings and their habitat, Nature. Their hierarchical paradigm that "human species is the highest in the biosphere" is common also to most Domination religions. "*We are the supreme and must have most of the world*"— does not this attitude justify the core paradigm of hegemony?

We cannot allow our sensitivities to be divided into a ladder like hierarchy by prioritising that sensitivity towards a certain type of suffering should always be more important for *everyone*. In a multi-dimensional situation, different kinds of suffering, issues and beings are non-comparable, except in exceptional or temporary situations. Societal (at the level of the whole society) and 'objective truths' cannot always be

considered more important than personal, interpersonal and 'subjective truths'. Often for a subject, one's experience of suffering and breakdown, one's subjective truth is more important, agonising and urgent than some 'objective' and 'generalized' one. It is mutual empathy and connection amongst those various types of truths that is crucial. It is this synergy that deepens our positive *interbeing* – the *Spring*. Only this can strive to heal and overcome the negative interbeing of the barriers and fragmentation of our sensitivities. This makes the problem exceedingly complex. Here, 'general solutions' are often impossible, if not a problem and nuisance.

To put our main points in a nutshell:

The principle of self-emancipation of the main group of the oppressed (for instance the workers), the argument of supporting those whose ability to fight and take on the power of Domination is highest, is a necessary and crucial guiding principle towards liberation. But it is not enough. This principle has a fatal flaw. Will this become sufficient if we add to it the streams of the struggle self-emancipation of each of the other major and minor category, like women, dalits, peasants, physically or mentally impaired/ different people, animals and Nature and so on? This enhanced principle surely is a fundamental principle of emancipation. But, even then, will it be sufficient to match and take on the insidious power of Domination/hierarchy? The idea that the principle of self-mobilisation of the sufferer, in itself, will solve the whole problem, leads to a vicious circle. This principle becomes vulnerable to the seed of self-centrism, fragmentation, opportunism, all kind of power pollution and future Domination.

As it is necessary for any community to stand against its oppression, it is equally important for them to support the struggle of others. Standing for ones own rights, taking support, and also supporting the *other*, have a symbiotic relationship with each other. They constitute a fountainhead pattern / stream of the ecosystem of emancipation,

Besides this, we also see within spaces of the oppressed, as in the society in general, a situation of diffuse and widespread gaps, fissures, hierarchy, conflicts, and also self-centrism, insensitivity and blocks towards supporting others. We see here gaps everywhere between availability of opportunity and ability to fight for one's rights (at the level of individual, cluster or class). These are like open and festering wounds on the body of each and every category of the oppressed and their struggle, however committed and beautiful. These are the openings via which the virus of Domination and hegemony infiltrates and colonizes the space of emancipation. These are potent seeds of future Domination.

Consider what happens when the struggle of any category of the oppressed to empower themselves grow more dedicated and militant. What happens when such a movement, while struggling to overcome, forgets or does not pay heed to strive against the 'little' hierarchies within itself, and also to support struggles those are

different or weaker? Oppression from the exploiters outside does reduce, but ironically, the gaps, 'wounds'; seeds of future Domination grow too.

The principle and tradition of self-emancipation is of course vital and central. But, this must be checked and balanced by other principles and traditions to prevent it from getting corrupted and lost.

With this need, we explore the second pole.

Discussing Tiep Hien in the light of one cardinal principle of Gandhi, Christ and others:

'YOUR COMPASS SHOULD BE WHETHER YOUR WORK IS BENEFITING THE PERSON AT THE BOTTOM (HINDMOST – THE WEAKEST AND MOST VULNERABLE) OR NOT'

All serious rebels have to agree with this principle. This is a fountainhead of our values, ethics and spirituality.

However, just like any other emancipatory category, this bedrock principle can also get connected negatively. We can take this 'compass' just as a moral principle, the superior stance of a 'non-sufferer' towards 'sufferers'. We can take it also from a stance where one's suffering has no connection with the hindmost 'down there'. Then, this can open one up to powerful and extensive negative streams and connections. We might give so much value to this principle that the perspective from the 'other pole', the need to connect with self-emancipation struggle of the oppressed, gets weakened or lost.

Moreover, Global and local State processes, UN, even World Bank (with its 'safety net' for the poorest), Dominational religions, exploiting classes wave this very flag of 'welfare', 'protection' and 'development', to legitimise and extend their power games. Hence, while holding this 'compass' we need to be aware that it is not a 'neutral' world. All sort of 'super-magnets' of Domination are around us. At best, it is like nursing those mangled by war, famine, or whatever, with compassion, but not bothering about anti-war or anti-exploitation activism. (Footnote – 2, given in the end of Part – D / End) Such fractured compassion and practice gets blocked from seeing the reality and absurdity of Domination. It fails to realise how Domination has to keep creating suffering, disability and the hindmost on one side, and on the other, organise the state, welfare and charity Establishments to 'protect' them. It is like the U.S. Government-military-industrial complex organising plunder and war on one side and campaigning against terror and for Human Rights!

Even at best, practicing this principle from the stance of a non-sufferer, as if 'we' (the charity providers) are free, not ruled and oppressed, opens us up to all types of powerful streams and patterns of paternalism. These patterns can be the roles of the giver/the taker, the martyr, the strong, the dependent, weak and traditions of the welfare/charity Establishments. (Footnote – 3, given in the end of Part – D / End) Modern global State is saying, "If you want to help the wretched amongst the wretched, why not take our money and machinery and do it properly?"

Hence, supporting the hindmost and supporting their struggles against the system that keep creating hindmost must be in positive interbeing. The striving by and for the hindmost must be connected with the major

streams of emancipation. This is crucial to strive against the power game that Domination and hierarchy play while creating and using the existence of the hindmost.

On the other side, the world of emancipatory organising must need to hold the 'compass', but also with the reversed stance. That is, they should be reflecting, "What has the mutual aid, resistance and other positive connections/patterns/currents emerging from the life of the hindmost, the weakest amongst victims, to offer to the streams of organised emancipation and its informal terrain?" We can find such currents to be like those species in the rain-forest ecosystem of emancipation that are rare but vital to its life and viability. (Footnote – 4, given in the end)

Our tiep hien would further question: 'But, who is the 'hindmost'?' And, is this 'compass' enough to balance and check the problem of emancipation getting into the fatal problems of internal hierarchy, gaps of opportunity, status, and ability, and finally, co-option?

WHO AND WHERE IS THE HINDMOST?

There is no fixed and clear-cut category somewhere down below who is 'most vulnerable' amongst the 'hindmost'– as a person or a community. It is a relative category, relationship and situation.

Hindmost is the state of being hit and afflicted by all kinds of trauma, oppression and exploitation, depletion, insensitivity and supportlessness. Hindmost is the consequence of a corrosive and paralysing 'poison gas' permeating the whole of the society and Nature. This poisonous situation can attack a community or an individual (creating the hindmost). It can make anyone of us helpless for a while; it can shatter some aspects of our vitality and social support to an extent that we are in a state of shock, unable to help ourselves to a significant extent. It can be a prolonged and perennial stage, or a transitory or fleeting moment. Like a drought or a negative Desert it is a complex of interconnected vicious cycles permeating the ecosystem of suffering / oppression everywhere. Hindmost thus can be seen as a negative, 'wrecking' eco-system. Hindmost is the ravage of the visible and mostly invisible war waged by Domination on the whole of society and Nature.

In claiming to be the worse amongst the hindmost, the footpath-dwellers might compete with the shanty dwellers, the 'visually blind' might compete with the 'mad', the 'Hijra' /transgendered/hermaphrodite with the 'Leper'. Then, what about those who are too broken or meek to even join this competition? What about those who are 'voiceless' – animals, trees, the insect...?

Then, are hierarchies absent inside each community of the 'hindmost'? And, do we not find some one to be an *oppressor* in one type of interaction, and the *oppressed* in another, however 'lower down' we go in society? Doesn't the 'hindmost' suffer from the problem of 'diffuse hierarchy, gaps between status, opportunity and ability'?

This is not to say that there are no victims (or personal / group identities of the oppressed parse) or they should not outrage and be assertive about their specific oppression. This is also not to mean that there is no hierarchy of oppression. There are surely many particular categories of oppression that are worse and more corrosive than many others. This is not only for clear-cut societal categories, but also for persons, diffuse situations, and discrete moments. Each of these should have due priority in emancipatory sensibility. Such victims will inevitably and justifiably feel anger, need to organise themselves and need to be supported to struggle against their victimisation. This is of course the first priority. Nevertheless, simultaneously, we also feel that victims and their movements need to understand different spaces where they are relatively better off and also where they themselves may be playing the role of the victimiser (this negative role may be choiceless or unconscious). It is from this understanding that they need to come forth to support the struggle of their partners in misery and the more vulnerable – down there. This then will add to the positive stream of resistance.

Then, what about the transient or momentary, 'hindmost'? Every individual, cluster or community goes through terrible patches in life where one falls into a vicious circle of massive trauma along with powerlessness / supportlessness. These negative currents feed upon each other and suck one into a situation of extreme vulnerability, shock and breakdown. Domination creates such 'mine-field', such phases or moments of temporary hindmost, even in the relatively less deprived spaces. Thus, domination on one side has turned society into a war field, where anybody anytime can get hit. On the other side it has released a virulent poison gas, or a epidemic far deadlier than any medical one like Tuberculosis or AIDS, where our material, social and psychological resource and ability to create empathy and support for each other is severely depleted. Such diffuse killing fields of the hindmost are spread everywhere, even amongst the spaces of the victimisers. However, this 'war zone' and 'poison gas' is generally denser as you go down the ladder of social hierarchy. Here, we have to go beyond asking who is the worse hindmost. The question here is, in this diffuse, invisible, toxic smog, how the pulverised, amorphous resistance can get connected.

In fact, such situation of extreme deprivation and trauma fragments emancipatory and horizontal solidarity. It might be afflicting a structured layer, community, or a phase or moment in anyone's life. This can happen within the oppressed at the bottom. This can happen anywhere in society. Such fragmentation is a consequence and a major pillar of Domination.

Such situations of extreme deprivation and trauma, such vortices of hindmost create and connect corrosive currents. These are loaded with despair, anxiety, insecurity, panic and negative pain. We can say that such currents of hindmost connect and form a powerful negative ecosystem. One might think, "I am lucky that I am not in that kind of a mess". But this only pulls one down in the blinding prison of security of conformism. In fact

Domination, with its modus of charity, privilege and protection from above tries to enmesh each category and person of hindmost level with vertical hierarchy, is reducing their horizontal solidarity. This is how Domination exploits, uses, divides and rules over the ecosystem of the hindmost.

Communities, relationships and individuals, when hit hard by this 'breaking assault' of Domination need of course to strive against it with all they have. They need everyone's support too. But, the problem also is, how such strivings can be connected? How the global dimension of the problem can also be engaged with.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COMPASS OF 'PRIORITY FOR THE HINDMOST'

The eco-system of hindmost is the poisonous fangs of the beast of Domination. Not only it breaks the person or group whom it hits but by paralysing our response, it pollutes whole of the Spring. The call to give priority for the hindmost then becomes a principle to connect and struggle against the global assault of Domination/ hegemony that keeps creating communities, phases and diffuse moments of hindmost, and keeps using them to further its control. It becomes heart of an orientation for struggling against hierarchy, between the oppressor and the oppressed, and also within the oppressed, giving priority to reach below to the weaker currents in each moment and situation. Taking on the eco-system of the hindmost, we stand against the whole of Domination.

Such orientation becomes a crucial nourishment and cross-connector (across gaps) in the eco-system of emancipation, a way to overcome hierarchies within the oppressed.

Let us look closely at any section of the oppressed, a colonised nation, factory workers, people in slums or footpaths, a broken person. Any category of the oppressed has so many layers of relatively more and less disadvantaged, little hierarchies and unequal exchanges inside and outside that particular cluster. There is always a gap everywhere, differences within the ability of the oppressed (as individuals, cluster, sub-category, community) to organise and fight successfully. Hence, whenever the oppressed struggle to 'rise' successfully, the power they obtain gets distributed unequally. Those who are smarter, have more ability and opportunity get more. Thus, the ability/opportunity hierarchy creates a social hierarchy. During any 'rising' of that cluster, the hierarchy relative to the main category of oppression does reduce, but the 'little' hierarchies inside and around the oppressed grow. What happens when any intermediate layer of the exploited rises in such a connected world? The hierarchy reduces somewhere, above this layer, but tends to increase in some *other* place – around, below and within that layer.

Nevertheless, anti-hierarchical currents are always created in any rising of the victims. This would become deeper and more holistic the more these initiatives /currents connect with the strivings of the victims placed lower down and in different situations. The more the rebellion and empathy (of any sufferer) strives to connect with the similar positive currents emerging from relatively different and lower levels, the better it would be able

to fight its own egotism, insensitivity and hierarchy around. You realise that howsoever you suffer there are always too many other layers who are in a rotten situation, if not worse off. In fact it is this 'gap' between different types of sufferers that Domination uses to create fracture, fragmentation and co-option. Leaning down, and connecting with the emancipatory strivings of others, enrich our resistance and provide us a crucial compass. This is the source of ethical force that can heal and reduce hierarchy within the oppressed.

Take for instance the bottommost layers in the 'ocean' of the hindmost, the animals and the biosphere. Are our love, compassion and struggle for their rights enough? What have their suffering, struggles for survival, their mutual aid and relationships given to us? Does not the devastation and avoidable genocide of animals and their species by our 'omnicidal civilisation' give crucial insight about our pathology? Therefore, in our initiative to support their striving for survival and foster a better space against our 'omnicidal civilisation', we humans alongside believing ourselves to be supporters of their 'cause', need also to understand how and where these 'bottommost layers' have helped us to become sensitive towards their rights. We can then begin to look into the dim niches and hidden corners, find their tradition of mutual feelings, aid and resistance. Our efforts also need to incorporate the wisdom from the ecology movement and our rich visible and invisible tradition of sensitivity and support of human kind towards them. Many currents of emancipation are already mindful of these processes.

SETTING OUR COMPASS WITH THE CURRENTS OF THE SPRING

Each time an act of force (from above), unequal exchange, deprivation of empathy and denial of support for one in distress happens, a tiny negative current/pattern is created and connected (it might be quite invisible). Domination is in fact also the *interconnection* of such negative currents, whether at large scale (class, caste, gender...) or at the vast terrain of the micro-levels and momentary instances. This 'informal' and fluid Domination/Hegemony is like some toxic smog that tries to corrupt everything and is spread everywhere. This is the immense negative ecosystem, the 'Desert' we are up against.

This is being opposed by the vast ecosystem of the *Spring*, the 'positive interconnection' of compassion and resistance in the large scale, and also in each tiny act. Domination is usually far better connected than counter-Domination. Blocking and breaking the positive connections within the *Spring* and then to "divide, co-opt and rule" is one main basis of strength of the *Desert*.

It is in this context that we can place the principle of giving priority to the 'hindmost'. It then becomes a compass to seek, connect and support each moment and current against sub-ordination (the lower and deeper being more important), their resistance and connection across the whole of the *Spring*. It is not alone a spiritual (ethical and moral) principle, but also a practical, political and economic one.

Engaging With Suffering – 2

Co-paining with ones own self and others:

Moving beyond the Dominationl perspective

Reducing pain and increasing happiness is a crucial value and drive for not only humans but also all living beings. It is a primary guide to any emancipatory effort. But is this value and drive always free of error, always connected positively? Can't this get connected negatively? Is this notion of pain and happiness always so clear-cut and polarised? What is the role of Domination in all this? Can't there be situations where paining is positive and pursuing happiness negative? We will be exploring this in the following section.

Our understanding of co-paining is situated in the context of the earlier sub-section that strives to take us – the sufferers and the oppressed towards horizontal connectedness against Domination and sensitivity to face the ironies of life. It also provides us the spiritual strength to strive against our egotism, conformism, erosion of sensitivity, to break out of the scripts, values and inner blocks organised by Domination.

Many paternalistic and high philosophical movements associated with religion strongly believe in connecting with pain but thereafter, as has already been mentioned earlier, they take the path towards *detachment and transcendence* – a 'high spiritual move'. They believe, it is through detachment and transcendence that we can reach and arrive at a superior level; and from there, high above, we will also be better able to understand and organise action geared towards reducing suffering.

Many other streams associated with religion de-link themselves from co-paining by creating the notion of *dutifulness* and *karma* or by surrendering to God and acting according to his will.

The Gandhian and many associated socialist movements believe in and begin with co-paining. Nevertheless they too have a contradictory relationship with suffering. They do believe in getting into the gates of pain. However, by over-valourising the categories like duty, service, sacrifice and morality, they somewhere begin to underplay the significance of empathy. They create a distance with the sufferer, and create polarity amongst the spiritually higher *server*, and the *sufferer*. In the process of such creation of a superior stance (even with its 'superior' humility) and distancing, they de-link themselves from ordinariness. This consequentially de-valourises the subjectivity of those with 'ordinary' pain. This further creates a distance between the 'ordinary' and the 'great self'. Here the great and ordinary *self* could be two separate selves or a split within a single unit (person). Thus, this could be a split within the *self* of the activist. Here the 'great self' becomes all-powerful. It then loses its ability to identify and cry along even with the 'ordinary' self, its own and that of others.

Most of these streams give a dual message. On one side they ask us to connect with *others* and on the other side they glorify a state of detachment. Most religious streams do take a positive, a valuable stand and

ask us to reduce our ego/sentiments, getting dispersed and instead engage in action (as social work, charity, reform, commitment, altruism...) aimed at reducing suffering. Nevertheless, even when this engagement with action becomes all-powerful, it becomes problematic. Our relationship with the being and agony of the sufferer gets de-linked from the struggle to reduce pain. Such actions and faith becomes alien and reified, a thing-in-itself – become open to expansionist currents alienated from the sufferer.

Such a position creates more problem as the transcendental state of mind takes the role of the 'superior self'. The 'ordinary self' (within oneself or other ordinary people) then becomes the *self* of ego, emotions, sentiments and 'mundane' suffering. The 'great self' is the one that acts, does great deeds, and is rational and detached. Ironically, this hierarchy within the *self* brings forth a kind of new egotism/ attachment to one's 'great self'.

In most religions it is also said, "In order to love everyone, one must detach oneself from personal relationships and one's own suffering". Also, "One must try to connect oneself with 'everyone' by de-linking oneself from personal emotions". Ironically however, there is no one who can be located as 'everyone'. Here, 'everyone' is an abstract notion. Here, one does get connected to it but only to encounter and bolster ones immunity – the inner block to empathy and co-paining at personal and interpersonal levels. It then becomes a re-conditioning of our emotions and an intellectual exercise. In order to love *all*, the struggle to detach oneself from personal and 'ordinary' emotions, experiences takes one to a peak where instead of getting connected with the *other*, *one begins to get more connected with the idea, the concept of loving 'everyone'*. This *idea*, this 'everyone', can also be ones family, caste, party, class, nation or God. This concept then becomes an end in itself, falls into a whirlpool, leading to a greater connection with ones own 'superior' ego.

What we are trying to understand and question is, in order to connect ourselves with positive action and extend love for others, do we really have to detach ourselves from 'ordinary' pain, persons, relationships, situations, personal emotions and suffering? Or do we need to problematise this further? Can't all these above categories and currents enhance each other and connect positively, take us towards co-paining with deeper connectivity?

However, in order to do this we have to consider the problems related to our personal emotions. Egotism, envy, possessiveness easily infiltrate most of our personal, ordinary, one-dimensional pain and emotions. Such emotions are usually influenced and contaminated or even are the creation of hegemony, so are vulnerable to egotism. In such a situation, relationship with 'ordinary' pain can isolate us from each other and co-paining. This can further lead to self-centeredness, block and indifference towards co-paining. (Footnote – 5, given in the end) Nevertheless, the same ordinary personal emotions are real, authentic, and a major part of each individual's struggleful existence. Here, on one side as these emotions make us self-centeredness the same on the other side make us open and understanding towards the tragedy of humankind, even the most 'ordinary'.

Can we understand our existence, tossed around by such diverse multitude of streams – often invisible, often beyond our ability to imagine – as an absurd and difficult reality? Can we understand our struggle to love

everybody in isolation as complex and grey? It might even get created by too much attachment to the concept of loving 'everybody' or activism. We must accept to encounter our *fall* and guilt of not being able to connect with everyone, every sufferer. But yet we can strive against these situations, our attachment with our ego, possessiveness, envy ... that takes us away from co-paining. The process, the journey here is also an end in itself.

We need also to understand that it is the journey of our 'ordinary' struggles, personal emotions, relationships and suffering that has a crucial role in bringing us to empathise with the *other*. It is here at the level of ordinary emotions that we need to struggle to bring together our personal emotions and connect with that of the other. We must also live, witness, cultivate and connect with our potential for co-paining, which has been invisible but always a crucial part of a positive *Interbeing*. In fact it is this feeling and realisation of interrelatedness that creates in us sensitivity to open up, to understand and experience the diverse currents of co-paining as a crucial and valuable ecosystem. It further gives us the strength to encounter the myriads of specificities of sufferings, and simultaneously relate with its mosaic holistically.

HAPPINESS AND PAIN – A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Possessing and expanding *happiness* blindly, like power and wealth, is a core drive of Domination.

"The more of happiness and pleasure we can get and grab, the better it is – devil takes the hindmost!" "Pain is bad – always to be shunned". This one-sided, competitive and consumerist paradigm is the basis of capitalistic Domination that engineers our desires, relationships and life.

Unfortunately, most streams of socialism do not critically examine this paradigm, this goal. They mostly criticise it at the level of *distribution*. "*Domination is happiness for the few, socialism will be happiness for all*". To connect with pain is assumed to be something negative and useless even here.

Religious aspects of Domination conceptualised suffering in such a way that its roots, too often in systems of oppression, get hidden or cannot be struggled with. Different Dominational religions did this in different, often antagonistic ways. But the general thrust was the same. They did it by making the pain (of suffering) as something that is our fault, for being too attached to ordinary life and desires; as something that has to be accepted (*fate, karma*); as something that is meaningful and blessed; as atonement of sins; as mystery of fate; or as our testing (by God) and maturing. Pain was also seen as something to escape from, via faith in God/guru, religious practices, meditation or detachment.

This history (of Dominational religion using this kind of engineering of pain to divert and block struggles against exploitation), made the anti-oppression traditions more cynical towards pain and co-paining. Thus, the streams of socialism see pain as something to be struggled against, shunned, avoided, or something that has to be borne with courage. "Do something to solve and overcome pain" — is the paradigm.

Firstly here, socialist streams mostly recognise those categories and elements of pain that are the consequence of the economic/political mode of production and rule. Similarly, other emancipatory streams (like dalit, women, anti-colonialist, adivasi...) usually highlight the suffering caused by the system that is

specific in causing that category of oppression which they are immersed in. Any kind of pain that does not fit in these categories is rendered secondary and invisible.

Our tiep hien stand in full support with rebellion of the victims against the systems that create their specific oppression and suffering. But we here are questioning, is there no significant category of pain besides the above?

Secondly, even when the pain is recognised, co-paining is not given much respect in the socialist streams. “One must *act* to change the system that creates suffering”, becomes their over-valued and isolated stand. “Turn your grief into class hatred”, goes a popular slogan of the left. Here co-paining, which is not leading to organising and struggling, is seen as something that would make people distracted, passive or weak. Most socialist streams do not see that immunising, fragmenting and preventing people from connecting via co-paining is also a central strategy and mode of Domination. This is organised for instance by drowning the people in insecurity, egotism, ambition, pragmatism, consumerism and then a new kind of dependency. Such curtailing of co-paining creates a block towards understanding the power of horizontal connections, the flow of empathy and co-paining as a mode of resistance that is as crucial as organised struggles and vital for its viability. Though the practice and concept of sacrifice (taking pain upon oneself) is present and is celebrated within these streams but as an unnecessary but unavoidable negative experience only – the price one has to pay for the happiness in the end.

None of these see or call for co-paining, empathising, crying with each other as an asset.

Pain as an entity that has both the positive and negative side to it – that may destroy or alienate but may also give the gift of sensitivity, resistance, empathy and togetherness, strength against Domination / hegemony, gets lost within these progressive as well as the religious streams. It is this complex process that we are trying to understand, problematise and also reclaim.

PAINING / CO-PAINING CAN OPEN THE DOORS OF EMPATHY AND ENRICH OUR RADICAL STREAMS

Consider these questions that all of us have to face along life’s journey.

“What to do if you/your close one is terminally ill, how to live with this pain?” How to empathise with the pain of the dying person? How to keep the relationship alive even after one with whom you shared this relationship, is dead? How to respond to your guilt when you begin to remember them less, those you never wanted to forget, whom you thought to be indispensable? How to cope with the inevitability of your own death; and that of your close ones? [See END NOTE – D-1, p. ‘ ON THE POLITICS OF MORTALITY’]

How to cope with the death of our dreams — big or small? How to cope with the sickness and death of our beautiful relationships and clusters? How to cope with the realisation that most of our emotions / nostalgia are at the virtue of conditioning, we are so much the instruments of Domination? How to live and understand the moment-to-moment reality of our predominantly choice-less and helpless existence, our smallness and our delusions of grandiosities?

These questions invoke an uneasy disquiet, remain unanswered and blocked within most of the above streams. This leaves Domination free to engineer the above kind of agony to suit its purpose.

We might sound strange in saying that Domination is also a tradition of rejecting and conquering *suffering* by the denial of many kinds of pains or by rising 'above them'. This is done by organising the state of *detachment or surrenderism* (to the tradition of security in 'normalcy') or on the other side, by consumerism, accumulation or the dream of a hierarchical and centralist development and such 'prosperity for everyone' (a dependency of its kind). Organising from above, blowing up, blocking and exploiting all the horizontal streams of pain and connection associated with our consciousness, sensitivity and empathy has been a central strategy of all kinds of Domination. These range from capitalism to Domination religion, patriarchy, paternalist family and hierarchical community, the regime of normalcy, consumerism and its ethical and psychiatric Establishments.

Then look at the immense variety of currents in the sea of pain. Who can deny that Domination is the main source, direct and indirect, of most kinds of pain? (Footnote – 6, given in the end) In this toxic sea, our horizontal relationships keep getting strangled up – choking, instead of strengthening us. Further, we pain for broken desires, needs, dreams, more warmth and fair spaces – personal, mutual or social. We have the pain of a broken person or someone coping with difficulties or even terminal illness. However, so many positive currents (of sensitivity, caring, sharing, human resilience, drawing out our compassion, resisting Domination, knowing our limitations and insights about our vulnerabilities, humbling our egotism, cracking our inner blocks, overcoming consumerism and so on) flow in this sea of pain.

In this ecosystem of suffering and pain, we can examine Domination / hegemony as organising and creating a pervasive architecture of connections of negative patterns, streams and blocks. This architecture is extensively woven with currents of anxiety and fear of pain. This divides the positive currents associated with suffering, insulating them from each other. The positive currents are then redirected in running away, up-climbing, trying to hide in pain-free traps. All these fragment our togetherness in suffering. These blocks and negative connections/currents are crucial for Domination and hegemony in further constructing 'normalcy' and 'civilisation'. Such blocks may infiltrate, even become our isolated *victim identities*, one's obsessive relationships with one aspect of pain we discussed above. They can manipulate even the pain, sacrifice, commitment and faith in the struggle. Though all these victim identities, 'obsessive' pains, commitments ... can connect with the positive currents yet these can be distorted to block us from connecting with the varieties of pain of *others* and even our own.

So the question is, should we be scared of and trying forever to run away from this sea of pain that is all around? Or should we accept it, learn to swim in it, explore its flows and connect with its positive currents?

CAN WE NOT CELEBRATE EXTREMES OF COMMITMENT AND AUTHENTICITY, AND AT THE SAME TIME EXAMINE ITS ASSOCIATED VULNERABILITIES AND PROBLEMS?

In all kinds of progressive literary traditions of the classic era, the image of the martyr, who conquers pain with his/her emancipatory commitment, has haunted us. Celebrating emancipatory commitment and sacrifice

is crucial. But, blowing up such passions and persons one-sidedly creates problem. It blunts our sensitivities for those who pain and resist differently. It blinds us to the gentle whisperings of the positive currents that flow through us. It creates hierarchies and dulls our introspective and critical abilities. Such self-righteousness (of the hyped up martyr) blinds one from seeing one's egotism, splitting one from sister streams, and finally, can lead to co-option. Streams worshipping martyrdom can keep creating zealots and bosses, even revolutionary.

On the other hand, what is wrong if we own up our 'ordinary' side? Can we not patch up *bodhisattva* streams (alongside the earlier heroic ones), who are always sensitive and anxious, scared of pain, cry, ridden with dilemmas and guilt, who keep *falling* but yet their large warm hearts and ability to locate and draw nourishment from positive currents all around keep them struggling for compassion? Such *bodhisattvas* we may not worship and make into an anchor but are easier to relate with. We can thereby access an immense world of enriching currents.

CO-PAINING AS A REBELLION

We can see tiep hien's call for entering the world of suffering, pain and co-paining (in emancipatory context) as a rebellion in itself. It builds crucial mutual, horizontal and downward currents/patterns/connections. It is a resistance against the streams of Domination. They call to change the 'normal' – *fight or flight and surrender to the embrace of Domination* stance towards pain. They call to burrow through the blocks made out of the insecurity, repulsion, fear that is associated with pain.

One of the main armour of egotism/dependency is repulsion to pain, fear, insecurity and uncertainty. In our introspective journey, the moment we encounter a flaw, an element of egotism, a negative side in us, we find it surrounded by barriers woven with pain, anxiety, fear, shame and guilt. How can we engage with our negative *self*, if this *field of repulsion* pushes us to evade and bypass it? Can we strive to introspect, struggle against our hegemony and egotism without questioning this shield of repulsion towards pain that is built into our psyche? Only by burrowing through our blocks, we along with pain can go through the gates of pain and swim into the seas beyond. Then we can understand the language of pain. Then we can explore, locate and connect with so many positive currents of anti-consumerism, anti-opportunism, subversive feelings and insight, nostalgia, co-sensitivity, anti-egotism, warmth and togetherness. We can struggle against our ego blocks, introspect, accept our *fall* and yet create *surfacing*. We can strive to connect with so many disturbing insights, crucial sensitivities, empathies and beautiful creativities. (Footnote – 7, given in the end) These may be inside us; these may be in the traditions flowing through literature, culture, discourse and so on.

"With the help of the thorn in my foot, I spring higher than anyone with sound feet."

[– Søren Kierkegaard, quoted in, THE GIFT OF PAIN.]

Co-paining, sharing of suffering and anguish, of your own and that of others, and thus connecting with the streams of horizontal empathy is a rebellion in itself. It is a rebellion against those streams of Domination that

first creates suffering and then blind, blocks, suffocates and warps our sensitivities associated with our pain and guilt that take us away from ourselves and others and thus further enhance negative suffering. Can we all empathise; cry together (at least sometimes, in specific but numerous situations)?

Let us listen to Western Anarchism with Camus:

"Suffering is individual, but when it moves to rebellion, it is aware of being 'collective', 'the adventure of all'. The first step of estranged spirit is to recognise that he or she share such estrangement with all human beings, Rebellion therefore takes the individual out of solitude: 'I rebel, therefore we are'."

[Reference: DEMANDING THE IMPOSSIBLE ...]

Further on, listen to Adrienne Rich, who says it for the one oppressed due to one's impaired body, but that applies equally to any person, a relationship, or a community living with a tortured mind in a uncaring, suffocating social space;

*The problem, unstated till now, is how
To live in a damaged body
In a world where pain is meant to be gagged
Uncured, un-grieved-over. The problem is
To connect, without hysteria, the pain
Of anyone's' body with the pain of the body's world. (1993)*

We have to be deeply rooted via co-paining to survive the malignancies of the *Desert*. We can say that a crucial bodhisattva stream of compassion is, "deep togetherness with one's own fractured self and the other, where the other is not another – but there is an inherent connection based on the inevitability of suffering and, the irrepressible persistency of compassion and resistance." This *deep togetherness* is in *interbeing* with compassion, understanding, empathy, co-paining along with resistance and rebellion against hierarchy. Domination and hegemony manoeuvres to divide the sufferers, their co-paining, their resistance. It uses suffering and pain to create such fractures. Earlier we saw how, so many traditions of religion and Marxism as well as other revolutions got trapped in such splits.

Can we co-pain – yet struggle against hierarchy/subordination all around, even amongst us, within us?

AS LIFE IS A PARADOX, SO ARE CO-PAINING AND CO-JOY INTERTWINED

The desire to share our happiness with others and get connected to their sense and experience of joy; the need to share our intense moments with those whom we are close to and with our own self is also a journey that takes us towards an egalitarian sensibility. To relate with concern, to respect each one's freedom and happiness, to share joyful and intense moments, to reclaim, seek and live these moments in a non-consumerist manner (with an awareness of suffering around us), is one core of our emancipatory tradition. Though sharing of happiness has its own life and autonomy, nevertheless we also feel that a genuine sharing of togetherness, joy and pain, will further connect us and enrich the positive streams, the *Spring in the Desert*.

One limitation in our reflection

These sutras do not give us any *window* to launch a discussion on how Domination and its counter traditions grapple to control the terrain of *desire*. This is the site where construction and organisation of our needs for nurture, security, comfort, pleasure, joy, our needs to celebrate our selves, our togetherness and relationships etc. keep going on. One core politics of Domination is its manufacture of these traditions that then masquerade as 'normal', 'spontaneous', 'moral', 'natural', scientific and even 'human' and emancipatory. These negative streams exploit and distort possibly the largest terrain of our life. On the other side, counter-Domination ceaselessly flows, struggles to reclaim and re-create these.

Western radical movements in a society with a high level of affluence and democracy keep creating space to act and ponder seriously over the problem of reclaiming our joy and desire.

However, it is understandable if Tiep Hien (64 -74) could not create such a space. Those were grim days. Tiep Hien were emerging from the monastic Buddhist traditions to fight against such utter barbarism, devastation and despair.

So, without any such window we could not go into this vital terrain. We will just mention that this problem is all the more critical for us from the organised traditions, whether Marxist, Gandhian or dalit liberation. In India the *organised* sector was quite blind to this terrain. It was mostly compromising with the tide of consumerist or conservative normalcy of various traditions of Domination – paternalism, brahmanism, capitalism ... Or they were opposing certain aspects of it ('norms') but with brahmanical or Stalinist asceticism for the committed. We will mention it again while discussing the fourteenth sutra (p.193).

OUR REFLECTION on the FIFTH SUTRA – D-5:

Against Accumulation – by the System

And Ours Too

Engaging with suffering and exploitation

Rebellion against its seeds

Tiep-Hien's stand regarding *suffering* is different than that of the various Dominational religions. Dominational religions see cosmic entities as supremely potent. They believe, "Correct religious practice, surrendering our mind to cosmic entities, using the experience of suffering to deepen faith (in them), can change us and liberate us from personal suffering, today or in the after-life. The *outer* material world will change too if we all change (our inner *self*)". Such view creates a block against seeing the (connection of suffering with) *outer* systems of exploitation and the world of struggles against it.

Tiep Hien seek to recognise suffering of all kinds, all around. But, they also see a principal root of suffering in the system of exploitation, its gross and subtle games, its processes of *accumulation*.

However, after that they take a surprising leap inward. Tiep Hien oppose expansionist accumulation within and around their own order, and within the spaces of organisations for liberation. They meditate upon, “How is accumulation by Domination related to accumulation by emancipatory organising?”

Egalitarian Cultural (Spiritual) Rebellion – III;

Summing Up

Anti-Establishment Marxists believed by the 60s that there must be a Cultural Revolution, to create the social soil for socialism and communism, after the *People’s Democratic Revolution* in the political-economy. After the failure of GPCR (*Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution* in China in 60s), the thinking was that there should be a cultural revolution, right from the day one, along with the political and economic revolution. Socialists who were closer to Gandhi were thinking in this way much earlier. Women and dalit, adivasi and toilers of the post colonies and periphery; the movements against authoritarianism, militarism, communal-sectarian fundamentalism and so on, each was engaged in a specific type of cultural revolution. Nevertheless, the problem seemed exasperatingly deeper than all the attempted solutions! They believed ‘solutions’, in themselves, would become new problems, sources of new splits!

THE HEART OF THE CULTURAL (SPIRITUAL) REBELLION OF TIEP HIEN

Compassion, resistance, rebellion, love, empathy, altruism, care and also anti-egotism, autonomy, equality and friendship, all these are not just some ethical values, mental states, or wisdoms for Tiep Hien. These are globally connected eco-systems, part of our *collective unconscious, more complex than we can ever imagine*. Hence, there is no path of philosophy, theory, moral order, true leadership/guru/tradition, no path of struggle, no path of meditation or analyses, no enemy *out there* or even *inside me* to struggle against or uproot that will, in itself take us towards these (complex eco-systems of) emancipatory ethics. Each of these *paths* does have a lot of positive currents, some more, some less. But in isolation, any one of these paths is never enough. Moreover, they are always connected negatively as well.

We do have the capacity of universal empathy, anti-egotism, and for rebellion against oppression (of any type). However, they are ungrown, like a basket of seeds. They are smothered, unconnected and fractured in various ways by our ‘civilization’. We are here considering the problem of how these possibilities and values can grow in so many different spaces and connect – to blossom into a whole rainforest.

Our *complex eco-systems of ethics* connect, create and are continually getting created by life in each nook and niche of society and biosphere. This is living all over the world. It is extended in time too (the past and present creating each other). These are connected positively as well as negatively. Thus, *cultural rebellion* must mean our attempt to celebrate and connect the positive aspects of all these in our engagement with life and suffering, to whatever little extent that is possible.

Tiep Hien (64 – 74) outlines this as commitment to connect with the different streams that strive against suffering, the *Desert* at three levels:

Firstly, the sea of diffuse infinitely varied **suffering all around us**.

Secondly, its **roots within the material and social system of Domination**; (those that were exposed by the socialist vision, and those revealed by each type of resistance and rebellion of the oppressed, large or small, visible and invisible, against capitalism and its globalisation; against militarism, authoritarianism and neo-fascism; women, dalit, adivasi, gays and lesbians, marginal, disabled, meek, and so on.)

Thirdly are the seeds and soil of Domination, as *future suffering* in our inner life *and* even within activism today.

Such commitments, at all these levels, are like walking on many roads at the same time that are different and even clashing, and sometimes complementary!

Thus, *spirituality* for tiep hien is a rebellion to free the human spirit. This is based on our initiatives of compassion for the sufferings all around, mutual respect and freedom to create understanding, definition and meaning (to enable compassionate activism) from getting suffocated, manipulated and exploited by Domination and hegemony. However at the same time tiep hien stand to support struggles against the roots of suffering, the systems of exploitation and discrimination of all types. This is spirituality to them. Finally, spirituality also means for tiep hien to become conscious about and to raise a voice against egotism, expansionism, and all kinds of vertical growth inside the individual, relationships and the emancipatory movement. This, they call the *seeds and soil* of Domination.

Looking at the history of struggles of the oppressed from today's vantage point, we might understand the imperative need for such many-sided approach.

The economic, political and spiritual (compassion and respect, ethics, meaning and solidarity...) benefits that people gain from the struggles against exploitation are mostly distributed unequally. **The more advantaged and assertive amongst the oppressed get more compared to others**. Thus, hierarchy based on every type of disparity (of wealth, gender, caste, merit, ability...) within the oppressed communities, groups and individuals keep on growing. Our hatred against the victimisers (the 'enemy out there') blinds us to the victimiser / up-climber inside us (the currents of hegemony flowing within). Penetration of commerce, money and competition keep growing inside us. Thus, seeds of Domination and hierarchy within keep sprouting and spreading as struggles and victories of the oppressed grow!

Even our potentialities for creating compassion get exploited. They are co-opted by the *social work Establishments*, the World Bank or UN, Governments/ electoral parties and business establishments on one side and the Dominational religion on the other. Our *spiritual* drives to celebrate compassionate anti-competitive streams in art and literature, or introspection and meditation to explore our non-egotistic possibilities all are exploited and re-sold to us by the establishment, the NGOs controlled by them, media, Guru industries and market!

Without a cultural (spiritual) movement against all these economic and cultural currents of Domination inside us, how can we prevent co-option, hierarchy and subsequent degeneration within the people's struggles? We also need to protect our world of initiatives for compassion from the similar negative currents.

In fact, today in our country, the malignant *soil and seeds* of Domination, its market and power games have grown too deep within the struggles (against the System) as well as within the terrain of compassionate activism. It is difficult to imagine struggles for emancipation to break out of co-option and demoralisation and take off at a holistic level without a cultural/ethical dimension.

Things do not look this bad in Europe as in India. Of course, we must add the belt from East Europe, to Russia, via China, Vietnam and all the post-revolutionary countries of Asia. **Here**, the initial victory and the subsequent co-option and degeneration of all kinds of Marxist, anti-colonial, Gandhian, socialist, dalit and adivasi traditions of emancipation of the past (except few marginal and lonely initiatives) surely are a major factor in creating a terrifying demoralisation and vacuum in emancipatory activism.

Ironically, these *seeds* are more dangerous within *us* – the ‘conscious ones’, the activists, leaders and organisations, all those who feel more passionately for liberation. Are we also not those who are more advantaged, dynamic, capable, smart (amongst and alongside the sufferers), where the virus of ambition and egotism thrive more? Thus Tiep Hien relentlessly oppose organisational and even personal up-climbing - getting fame, status, and wealth for doing emancipatory work.

WE CAN ASK, WHY SUCH AN EXTREME STEP?

Won't it help emancipation if ‘meritorious & dedicated’ activists and organisations can ‘accumulate’ worth, influence and power “to do the good wok better”?

The answer is both yes and no. To understand this we need only to look at the history of organisations committed to emancipation, whether Marxist, Gandhian, non-brahmanical, Buddhist or dalitist. These organisations were mostly authentic and were doing a lot of positive work to begin with. They believed in what they were doing. But, they all justified power (over others) and the incentive methods, accumulation of power, respect, ‘meaning’ – principles of practical management. They believed that all this was, “In order to do more for just causes and humanity”. This was also true to a large extent. Nevertheless thereafter, most usually, these organisations and individuals started getting locked into a vertical trajectory and regime.

The invisible egotism easily infiltrates and hides itself within the tradition of *self-sacrificing activism* (and organisation). Then, it can create havoc. **It can manipulate our subconscious even more!** Such underground egotism makes us believe, “To make use of accumulated power, respect, words and meaning...(in order to struggle against Domination and push out the false flags of emancipation) is always for the good of the oppressed, particularly when it is in our correct and committed hands”.

We fail to see that by amassing more power, respect and ‘meaning’ for us, we are also creating a lot of space for our negative ego to expand and get connected with the negative currents. In this path, we also get enmeshed in exploiting the *informal* sector culturally and socially. This is seen and legitimised as, “Utilising the idle informal terrain for good work”. We become too conditioned to see this as a basic root of *hierarchy*. We can no longer see the legitimisation of similar hierarchies around respect, power, and ‘meaning’ ... within our

emancipatory organising. We become helpless victims of our *emancipatory ambition* and infighting. Finally, co-option into Domination and decay of egalitarian co-operation becomes the principal aspect.

Has there been any exception to this, in the last twenty-five (Democratic, Gandhian socialists and Marxists came to power in many parts of India, in 1977) or fifty-four (victory of our anti-colonial movement, 1946) or eighty (victory of the Bolshevik revolution) or hundred and fifty (the First International) or twenty-five hundred years?

WE HAVE HAD FEW EXTREMES OF THE EMANCIPATORY SPECTRUM

On one side we have the traditions of Marxists, socialists, non-brahmanical, dalitist and others, those who believe, “Only social engineering and mass activism based on consciousness and the correct theory can bring liberation (external and hence internal)”. On the other side, we have the egalitarian streams associated with religion, that believe in struggling for beautiful values through personal change, by self-actualisation and transcendence (inner and hence outer), believing in the good power of Divinity. We have a large number of in-between trends – Gandhian to democratic socialists and so on. Then there are also the anarchist and existential streams, mostly atheistic that keep personal activism and authenticity at the top.

But aren't all these paradigms of change somewhere denying the power of the amorphous, mist-like, horizontal currents (the *informal* terrain) that invisibly keep creating and nourishing our emancipatory values? In denying these vast positive horizontal currents that created the visible emancipatory spectrum too, do we not get stuck to the stance that “only we bear the burden of liberation” and, “Our expansion is equivalent to emancipation”?

Tiep Hien believe that such problems can only be tackled by the praxis of deepening the *interbeing* within the *Spring* — a different way of *growing*.

TIEP HIEN MAKE A RADICAL SHIFT

They conceive the *middle path* not as a *path* in the usual sense, which everyone must follow. Their vision is of striving to open up to the immensity of the *Spring*, of being enriched by, enriching, and connecting the positive currents all around. This is with the awareness that these currents are always associated with the negative streams. The vision includes and goes beyond the ideology-centric and issue based mass struggles devoted primarily to *outer* change. Their realisation also takes them beyond those traditions that puts quest for *inner* change at the centre. While doing the work of caring, witnessing and rebelling, such positive connections are crucial, whether in rebellion of specific victims, or single issue based local initiatives.

Such opening up to positive streams consciously and unconsciously influences our mind and also our organising. Tiep Hien recognise these streams and their connections as a crucial source that can take us towards conscious outer struggles and also at the same time, towards engagement with introspection and inner change. This opening of our doors can only begin with the practice of humility, i.e. learning to see the positive currents all around and the negative currents in us.

Tiep Hien stand for a deep cultural movement of unimaginably many colours, supporting the need of each colour to flourish. At the same time, Tiep Hien stand for nursing the *unity (interconnection of positive currents) in diversity*, the holism of the *Spring in the Desert*. Their understanding helps us to concentrate upon and also to go beyond the present victimisers. We have to dig out the negative currents that keep creating the *victimiser out there*, and which keep trying to create the same within all of us. This can help the rebellion and compassionate aspects to grow amongst all *others* in the *informal* as well as the *organised sector*, within streams that would always be more or less *expansionist*. We have to learn to tap deeply into counter-hegemonic, non-egotistic streams flowing everywhere within the society. Then we can create better streams of living and activism while endeavouring to down-climb, and help to nourish our sisters of the *Spring* at the same time.

MOST OF THEIR SUTRAS CALL FOR A DOUBLE-EDGED STRUGGLE

Each sutra calls for a rebellion against a specific aspect of Domination outside – economic, social, as traditions of organizing, philosophical, ethical and cultural. At the same time, it is also a call to rebel against the seed of the corresponding aspect of Domination inside us, the specific hegemony. It is also a call to practice what we believe in our organizational principles and in our personal life.

In each of the sutra, they are trying to create the cultural/spiritual *mindfulness*, creating specific windows to connect with the positive currents to transform both the *inner* and the *outer* in a synergistic way.

Thus (in the first Sutra), we can imagine them calling upon us to see Domination as imposition of obedience and worship of authorities/ideas from above. We need to rebel against it. Then, at the same time they call, “Must we not strive against worship of *our* authorities/ideas, even emancipatory? Otherwise, how can we open ourselves to learn from others and also our failures and *falls*?”

Again, “Domination is accumulation, expansion, hierarchy and social engineering – usurping all kinds of spaces, horizontal connections and initiatives of the people”. We stand for opposing this. Then, at the same time must we not also stand against all these negative currents of expansionism, engineering and suffocation of spaces that are a frequent by-product of emancipatory activism/organising inside the oppressed, inside us? (The Third, Fifth, Eleventh, Twelfth, Thirteenth ...suras)

TIEP HIEN CALL FOR RADICAL SCRUTINY OF OUR PERSONAL LIFE AND EVEN ACTIVISM OF CREATING COMPASSION/ALTRUISM/ANTI-EGOTISM

Tiep Hien throw open to radical scrutiny, the vast terrain of ‘ordinary and personal’ life. Every moment of each relationship, our dreams, even radical – are the soil where the currents/seeds of Domination are grappling with the currents of resistance.

Each act of hierarchically unequal exchange of labour (whether marketable or not) does connect the negative currents. But does not each hierarchically unequal exchange of caring and compassion, respect, influence and meaning also connect the currents of hegemony? Currents of Domination, like a toxic mist, contaminate and enmesh everything.

Tiep Hien throw open to radical scrutiny, the vast terrain of activism of creating compassion / love / altruism. We create an act of *compassion*. Tiep Hien say, “*Question yourself whether it is building-up your status, honour, power, money... in a hierarchical way.*” These are the negative currents flowing through our act.

In fact, we can extend this argument. We can see today as to how vertically organised and connected institutions create hierarchies, *dam up*, feed upon and exploit mutual and autonomous streams of compassion, respect and spiritual/social warmth, meaning, empowerment that keep flowing within people. Such vertical institutions are everywhere. They may be connected with up-climbing political lobbies or parties, ‘secular’ State-processes (U.N, World Bank and Welfare and Development sectors, party-governments) or with ‘Dominational religions’, vertically organised NGOs. They seem to be a crucial compliment to the market processes, and the much too visible war industry/nationalism as the producers of legitimacy of Domination.

Tiep Hien throw open to radical scrutiny, the vast terrain of activism of struggling against egotism. Dominational religions, even the streams of sectarian loyalty to family/ethnic category/nation/State and so on, harness and dominate our streams of altruism/anti-egotism. They tear apart our personal or some idea/authority/sect-centric aspect of anti-egotism from the whole *eco-system of anti-egotism*. Then they make us surrender to some other egotism of vertical categories, like God/guru/social hierarchy/institution, charity establishments. (This fracturing occurs even when done for some egalitarian, anti-oppressive purpose. For instance, the anti-egotism of surrendering to some emancipatory authority can easily get connected to negative traditions.) People fed up of consumerism, self-centrism, competition, alienation of modern capitalism too often fall into these ‘alternate’ spiritual streams.

WE MIGHT SAY, “THIS VIEW IS TOO MORALISTIC AND SCEPTICAL. IF WE FUSS ABOUT SO MANY LITTLE THINGS, HOW CAN WE ORGANISE THE BIG CAMPAIGNS / GOOD WORK?”

Here we must understand that according to the Tiep Hien spirit, all these *scrutinise* and deconstruction are not to be done with a separatist, judgmental, sectarian attitude of finding the ‘pure’ stream. Tiep Hien appeal to us to see each act of compassion, resistance, creating non-exploitative friendship (between persons, streams, initiatives and movements), as adding to the positive eco-system though all these categories are always enmeshed in hegemony. Thus, whether *in tiny, invisible spaces or in the big campaigns* – these are adding to the moisture, the raindrops. They emphasise that raindrops, the water below the surface, and even the invisible droplets in the moisture are crucial for the ecosystem of water, for the *Spring in the Desert*.

We can look at it from another angle. Most progressive traditions will go for the *big campaign* and not value the *little things*. It is all the more reason that some streams do otherwise and thus create a countervailing influence. It will also help the big campaigners to reduce their competition.

Everything act of compassion and resistance has positive and negative linkage. Tilting the mix a little, shifting the balance a little is mostly all that we can possibly do to make it more counter-Dominational, better connected, more emancipatory. This is one core to our Cultural (Spiritual) rebellion.

It is learning to fly like a bird in a storm, swim in a rough sea. There are too many currents all around, all far stronger than we are. We have to learn to tap into those that will take us in the direction we want to go!

We must create the *eye*, the senses to feel the streams of *rebel compassion* that nurture resistance, help the more deprived, give priority to the relatively hindmost. These are thickly present throughout the society, though mostly in a diffuse, amorphous and invisible way. These flow in the Gandhian, socialist, and Marxist streams, movements against centralist Globalisation, war, authoritarianism, communalism, dalit, adivasi or women's resistance and various religion-associated streams – in innumerable citizens independent initiatives and NGOs (that are striving against getting vertically controlled). These also flow in the much vaster informal terrain, through each person everywhere. Similarly, the currents of non-up-climbing, non-opportunism and non-egotism are also scattered all around. The critical need is of improving their understanding and horizontal linkage with each other wherever they are, between persons, initiatives, relationships and movements.

OUR REFLECTION on the SIXTH SUTRA – D-6

A broken bridge

conflict and fracture amongst streams of spirituality and revolt

Can We Bridge Outrage, Rebellion And Love

Historically, emancipatory streams associated with compassionate spirituality (like Gandhian, certain aspects of Tiep-Hien) and those associated with outrage and revolts (like Marxian, dalitist etc.), have been more in conflict than in cooperation. This has deeply fractured the libertarian world. One major tradition of this conflict has been around a series of connected concerns, “*is it right to divide the world just into ‘enemies vs. the oppressed’; to outrage, hate and be angry and violent; or should we see the basic unity of all and solely use the transforming power of love and ‘compassion for everyone’ instead?*”

We can see both these traditions taking a stand that is one-sided as well as essential for emancipation. In order to create an egalitarian emancipation, we need to problematise these stands — understand the positive as well as the negative side within these streams in conflict and find a bridge that connects us to both.

In the streams of conventional revolts, getting focussed and fixated to visible categories (persons / party / class / communities / leadership) in power today as *enemies*, celebrating our outrage, anger, militancy against them is, in too many situations, necessary and crucial. However, this opens us to currents of one-sidedness, self-righteousness and egotism. We become so worked-up that we cannot even cooperate with our sister streams. Then, we can't resist the emergence of *victimiser currents* from within us, the various seeds and pollution of power, as we grow larger. This type of tight focussing of our psychic energy (of hatred/non-forgiveness) against the present managers of oppression diverts us from struggling against the seeds & soil, the deeper though less visible patterns and traditions organising the system. Our compassion becomes

intense, but narrowed down and single coloured, locked in a tunnel vision. It can then easily be put in conflict with sister streams, fractured, blinded and derailed – an easy game for hegemony and Domination.

On the other side, streams associated with conventional spirituality and holism tend to water down or reject the *oppressed vs. oppressor* — the bipolar aspect of reality. They reject and negate the inevitable outrage, militancy of the victims and their struggles against the system just as ‘poisons’, ‘egotism’ and “fighting for greed and power”. Their uncritical celebration of the universal dimension of love and compassion urges us to understand the oppressor with the *eye of compassion*, yet it loses its ability to see the victims and their need for rebelling against oppression with the same eye. It immunises us to the agonised psychic state of the oppressed, their anger and victimization. We then fail to see how outrage, anger and rebellion are often inevitable and necessary for the oppressed to come out of the effects of their trauma, humiliation, degeneration, fear, passivity and surrender. This *universalist* tradition of understanding often blocks one from taking sides in such a divided world of oppression and revolt. But, is this too not taking a side? In trying to take a view based on ‘higher’ grounds, one somewhere develops a critique of oppression but remains within its kingdom. –(See Footnote – 8, given in the end, also see *Note in the End*, 2, on *forgiveness* – P.)

TIEP HIEN (64 – 74) WAS NOT PERFECT.

(From the Introduction, p.) Our discussion of the limitations of Tiep Hien should not be seen as some 'objective evaluation'. Every stream of emancipation has bunches of specificities rooted in its point of origin, its history. Seen from different angles these specificities can be perceived differently. A 'limitation' for some can be 'asset' for another. For instance, for some, the proximity of Tiep Hien with religion can be seen as a limitation. But this must have been a crucial 'asset' enabling them to set up the multi-religious coalition against war and reach out to religious/ 'ordinary' people from Vietnam to U.S.A. with effectiveness. We feel that Tiep Hien played a great role in their time and we have many things to learn from them even today. We believe that what we are calling as 'limitations' is a view limited by our specific circumstances. We believe that what we are calling as 'limitations' of Tiep Hien are not their shortcomings as such. These are more the limitations that would result if we start copying their sutras in our specific circumstances that is so different. The same (what we are calling as limitations of Tiep Hien) can be 'assets' for different kind of streams and in different kind of situation, for example within the space of predominantly religious streams that are seriously concerned with social suffering. With this understanding we discuss this issue below.

Here, we can read something in the life of Tiep Hien in 64-74 that does not come out clearly in the words of their statements and sutras. These sutras say more about compassion, even understanding the victimiser but less about understanding the revolt of the victims. In fact, instead of naming the victimisers (for instance the colonial war led by the US State), calling clearly for revolt, the sutras are worded in indirect ways as, “*We must have the courage to speak out*”; “*Take a clear stand against oppression*”; “*Prevent others from becoming exploiters*”; and “*Prevent by all means war and exploitation*”.

However consider their life and activism within their world. Trampled under the dictatorship hoisted by imperialism, theirs was a time of total war. Tiep Hien were not an underground organisation with parallel power that could speak without restraint. It is possible that they were less connected with other traditions of revolt. It is also possible that they were just being tactful. We cannot be sure. **Nevertheless what we do know is that during such times, their life, activism and death was a categorical statement, a taking of side, a revolt in itself.** (See Appendix – I) Hence, being a part of their life, these sutras were no less a part of their revolt. Torn out from those times and their lives, the sutras appear to be somewhat vague and one sided. Like in India, such sutras, such shying away from clarifying and naming the enemies and the need to rebel would look like taking the side of reform rather than rebellion. Most of our ‘progressive’ bosses can recite these sutras without any feeling of guilt. The later formation of Tiep Hien in US seems to have adopted the sutras without taking the heritage of their struggle against Imperialism and war. (See Appendix – II)

Our tiep hien

We want to clarify that we are concentrating more on reading the *sutra* of the life and activism of Tiep Hien in 64-74, rather than their sutras on paper. We are trying to read the sutras too, but in light of their life of rebellion. Also, we are interpreting the sutras from the point of view (one may call it a bias – taking of a side) of rebellion that is everywhere, visibly and invisibly.

Thus tiep hien stream can be read as the *interbeing* of three core currents. First is practising compassion for all kinds of suffering, here and now. Second is opposing the material/social roots of suffering. This is rebellion against all oppression and its Systems. Third is opposing the seeds and soil of Domination inside us. Each of these core streams is primary, none being less important than the other.

The first stream urges us to create compassionate activism for all kinds of suffering howsoever strange or marginal it may appear to the organised sectors of emancipation. It means understanding and struggling against the negative currents of conformism, ‘normalcy’ and indifference to our varied world of suffering. It means questioning and opposing, howsoever crucial, our preoccupation with our emancipatory project around one type of suffering if this creates insensitivity towards ‘ordinary’ and diverse kinds of suffering. Such insensitivity is the seed of the oppressor that lurk within us.

The second stream calls for rebellion and also supports revolt against all oppressive systems and traditions. In a real world it also means compassionately understanding and valuing power struggles organised by the victims, their outrage, anger, militancy and violence, both their positive and negative roles within the revolt.

The third stream grapples with yet another root cause of oppression. It refuses to get stuck to and blinded with an overblown anger and hatred against the *body* of any particular oppressor, person or a fixed flag, the current bosses of the system. The third stream examines the problem of the egotism within the struggle of the victims, the challengers against the present oppressors, and all sorts of emancipatory activism. This might sound problematic, but such a statement coming from the voice of the victims (Tiep Hien 64-74) and their supporters do highlight an essential need for a cultural and spiritual rebellion against egotism/power worship, within all *good work* and emancipatory initiatives.

Realising the positive and negative *interbeing* of these core streams above, the healthy tension, conflict, distortion and balance between all these and then improving their positive connections is essential for an effectiveness that is empathetic, sustainable and holistic.

The problem is, how egotist/expansionist type of drives are able to pit these sister streams against each other. Then, what should be an integral part of a holistic process, gets fractured. This clash becomes a process-in-itself, a powerful negative patterns and stream feeding on itself and other traditions of conflict, fractures, egotism and hegemony around.

We have been discussing the problem of such fractures and the emergence of such negative streams of infighting, in different situations earlier as well. We have called these traditions of conflicts as – the tradition of *inner vs. outer change; compassion vs. reason and rebellion; reform vs. revolution; organised sector vs. informal sector and so on*. One major problem in our country is that these problems are not posed or examined in a holistic way. Hence, breaking this silence, raising these issues, patching up words, concepts and language to pose the problems of one-sidedness, fracture and conflict of sister streams within the traditions of emancipation is crucial. It can help us see ways to move beyond.

OUR REFLECTION on the SEVENTH SUTRA – D-7

The coming together of sand, mud, and stone

The standing pillar, distinctive yet merged into the whole

From the coming together of collectivity and individuality to the surfacing of interdependence

In the emancipatory lore, we grow up knowing, "Unity is best". But, coming together of the oppressed doesn't always mean the holistic enrichment of the rebellion against Domination. As people unite, positive currents flowing through them and around do get together, but negative currents get linked too! So the result is complex. Sometimes 'negative currents, patterns and collectivity' can get connected better than the positive.

How, under what situations negative patterns / connections can overgrow and swamp us? How we can enhance the positive aspects of our individuality and the linkage with the positive flows, and not lose our footings in such negative storms? How we can question and fight against our paternalism/servility/conformism on one side and individualism on the other?

We seem to be caught amidst an impossible crossroad, wherein on one side Domination multiplies and enhances itself by encouraging the formation of a paternalistic psyche in individuals (and currents and streams). In this respect we need to remember that by denying the positive growth of the individual [Footnote – 9, given in the end] (or of our individuality), paternalism leads to the creation of the suppressed selves, connects negative currents of servility. In consequence, more often than not, structures of paternalistic self (or such patterns of currents/connections) survive by first seeking, fusing and worshipping totalistic symbols (as the *other*) by putting them on a pedestal. If and when the idols fail and *fall* (in the perception of the paternalistic *self*), they react. This *self* of ours retaliates. It begins to destroy the very same symbolic image that it had considered as sacred, and which it was fearful of and dependent upon. In our *flow* model, this represents a strengthening (journey) of the vertical connections/patterns (from servility to resentful reaction) overpowering the horizontal ones in various ways. These go on at all the levels of *self*, relationships and clusters.

On the *other* side, at the very same crossroad, in alliance with a consumerist outlook, Domination fosters the development of overgrown individualism – streams of identity formation based on the foundations of competition, exclusivity, separatism and antagonism. Thereby, though apparently indifferent to one's surroundings, deep down as individualistic beings, people's existence rests on currents of conflict and competitive opposition against the *other*.

Though seeming to be different, yet both paths of the crossroad have a symbiotic relationship with each other. Each creates and enhances the *other*. Here, more suppression leads to more of negative egotism (individualism) and then the other way around. Negative ego in a paternalistic culture creates authority of one kind and the same in a more individualistic culture takes a different shape.

Thus, different in features, both paths overlap and lead to similar consequences. Both enhance a self-structure (or vortex of negative currents) that can exist only in juxtaposition to an antagonistic (opposed and/or subordinated) *other*. Both models propel bipolar (resenting/worshipping) tendencies and subtly affirm that identities can only be realised in (idolatrous) fusion and also destruction or competition against the *other*. In a subversive manner, a conflictual relationship with the *other* becomes the hallmark and the defining characteristic of the *self*. This *other*, could be any living being, individual, ideology, sectarian perspective, race, religion, region, nation or a symbol. The *other* could also be a guardian, authority, teacher, and leader, Nature or God.

In either case the ramifications of such dominance-oriented self-structures are immense indeed. Both the paths lead to an erosion of mutually enriching interrelatedness – horizontal connections of positive currents. In accordance with either of the bipolar modes (resenting/worshipping) – the essence of our life, our potential for positive *interbeing* is destroyed or completely marginalized.

Thus, we seem to be either endlessly caught amidst the throngs of a paternalistic culture that deceives with its semblance of a *perfect collective*, the *Parivar* (large joint family in our culture) or by the functioning of the high capitalist culture, wherein another illusion of each being a strong individual is maintained. Actually both these cultures take us towards separatism, egotism and servility, though in different forms. In either of the two spaces we hardly find any possibility of establishing equal or harmonious relationship with the *other*.

The existence of such unacknowledged yet deep divides and over-dependence (whether gross or subtle) on the *other* creates and sharpens the notion of the *enemy* – a targeted entity ready to be devoured and annihilated especially during moments of transition, chaos and confusion. Propelling such action and based in a collective scenario, the first – the paternalistic psyche – is limited by its sense of identity that rests exclusively within the narrow confines of its “community” (be it ideology, party, panchayats, the patriarch, family, race, caste, religion, neighbourhood, region etc.). The second, capitalist inspired orientations, too offer a path of consolidating identity by trapping the individual into a vicious cycle of individualist, consumerist, ambitious, power oriented, ambiguous and *self-centred* activities. The individual here surrenders to his/her trapping but keeps believing in ones independence

In having acknowledged the negative power and impact of consumerist cultures, in this part let us stop a while and concentrate a little more closely on the first of the two forces, the Domination inspired paternalist collectives (or traditions). Those rest on an antagonistic (and worshipful) relationship with the *other* and deny as well as disrespect, even the positive potentials of a growing individual. Within such confines, the *self* with its vulnerable psyche lacks in individuality. Such a *self* repeatedly experiences (consciously or unconsciously) a growing sense of identity crises. In consequence, sooner or later, it inevitably begins to seek its identity through an enmeshed bond with the collective that it is associated with. (As already mentioned, this collective could be any pyramidal human grouping or tradition, be it religion, caste or race based, including even the most egalitarian organized movements of resistance.) Functioning as an (often invisible) anchor, the collective takes on the task of providing the individual with an identity, a face. As a consequence, even as each individual seeks one's *face* through it, the collective comes to acquire an unquestioned status and is recognised as being an *entity* in itself (over and above the individual). The egotism of the collective and the *egotistic* identity of the *self* form a vicious circle. We can also say that the vertical connections/currents keep growing by feeding upon, devaluing and wasting the vitality of the horizontal ones. One main mode of such negative (vertical) connections is fanaticism of any type. During insecure, unstable and violent moments the emotions and rage embedded within the lost, suppressed, fragmented *self* (pre-born) are lived out in the

service of maintaining the negative collective and then, a state of blind mass frenzy directed at destroying the *other* (and thereby preserving and valorising the collective *self*) is unleashed.

This becomes possible as under paternalistic or capitalist structures the *self* is maintained on a highly defensive and vulnerable foundation that permits little scope for reflection. This makes it difficult for any person or movement to recognize the existence of negative currents (including one's suppressed sides which may have never been given a chance to grow under relationships organised around paternalistic circles) or even the seeds of the victimiser within. In turbulent times, therefore, the inner frenzy and rage can comfortably be projected and directed outwardly against the *other*, the identified enemy. And over time, the (collective) *self* begins to seek its identity almost exclusively through its conflicted stance towards the *other*. We may once again take note of the fact that a reference to the *self* could here imply the self of a particular individual (created by the collective sub-conscious) or the streams creating the *self*/identity of a collective. Similarly, the *other* could be a person, a religious order, race, caste, political organisation, region-based sectarianism and so on – any tradition so perceived. The above understanding may also help us to comprehend instances and movements of sectarian mass hysteria that darkly mark the life and course of even the most idealistic collectives and traditions.

In essence then, when the collective (large-scale connections) that is otherwise an essential part of the movement of resistance, emerges by suppressing the existence and growth of the horizontal connections, streams and also the individual, who are the life force of its creation, it inevitably unleashes a misdirected fury and thereby encounters its own *fall*. Here the negative connections grow malignantly by subordinating and feeding upon the horizontal ones. Engulfing and swallowing even the residual traces of positive individuality, during such extreme instances, the collective directs the movement of its cadres through a highly subversive process. Its disguised need for power is now transformed into a “sacred” pursuit, a “meaningful” quest, demanding the annihilation of the “identified other” and nothing less than a “total sacrifice” from its group members.

In moments of mass frenzy thus, the inherently hierarchical structures, i.e. currents of Domination (along with their associated emotions) within each person are lived out, connected, amplified and can explode in paranoia and violence. A state of daze – paralysis of one's critical faculty (consciously experienced as a sacred and meaningful struggle) characterised by the imprints of a victim identity and coloured by an emotional state of intolerance and antagonism overtake the actions of the collective. With loudly reverberating echoes of a “justified mission”, the collective (now an unquestioning mass of suppressed selves) moves to destroy the *other* and thus affirm itself.

We may note that here the gap between “us” and “them” is strong enough to bury the victims into a permanent victim identity. Here, the victim is unable to look at the system of Domination within oneself and so does not encounter 'him/herself' as the *other*. In consequence, the person as victim buried in the victim identity cannot see the core negative currents of Domination within, which 'he/she' so clearly can see in the *other*.

Here the invisible dream of an identity of the powerful (dominator) behind the *rebel-victim identity* is not recognised, hence a radical alternative is not created.

Further, here the *individual* within the collective and the collective as an entity do not get a chance to understand and accept the need to struggle and purge out the Domination dreams and values that shape a part of their own identities. They are also denied the chance to learn to live with their core insecurity that would emerge if they do so (strive to purge out the Domination dreams), particularly when the alternatives are so diffuse. In such a situation they can fall into the traps of Domination and then fill their emptiness by creating some meaning / identity as an anchor. This meaning could be emancipatory but yet enmeshed within the dream for power-over-other (as the seed of Domination). This meaning could also be an egalitarian and authentic commitment of one's life and collective. However in any case when this meaning becomes an unconscious anchor, it creates a block to see with a critical eye the Domination within co-opting the most beautiful commitments and movements.

In having arrived so far, it is important for us to reiterate here that we are in no way taking a stand against collective human groupings per-se. We deeply respect and stand for egalitarian collectives. We also understand that they will always have aspects that are pyramidal, paternalistic and are contaminated in various negative currents, more or less. We stand for the solidarity and struggle for empowerment of those who unite on the basis of their common victimisation and disempowerment. However, in writing the above, we believe that it is imperative for us to understand *how and why* collectives, which were created to struggle against exploitation, for equality and the betterment of society, too many times fall a prey to forces of Domination, suppression, bureaucratic cooption, sectarian paranoia, mass hysteria and Fascism – when they grow large. How is it that they often come to unleash unbelievable forces of violence, destruction or a decadent oppressive 'socialist' capitalism and suffering?

Hence, in each of our positive human groupings we need to allow the space for positive individuality and horizontal interconnections (mutual friendships) to flourish. We do not need cadres and blind violence. We rather need to change the currents of blind dependency / cadrehood that is present in all of us. We strive for them to change into those that enable individuals and horizontal clusters and connections who even as they come together to become a part of the collective can yet recognize and stand for their compassion, autonomous criticality and authenticity. By individuals we do not mean the legitimisation of egocentric individualism. In fact it is the *other* way around – the call is to disentangle ourselves from the shackles of negative ego, negative vortices that are fed and fostered by the system of Domination and suppression of healthy individuality. Such systems, be these paternalistic or individualistic, as analysed above, do not permit us to grow autonomously and laterally. We are denied awareness of feelings and knowledge that are considered low. Our ability to choose is also curtailed. Instead they fervently draft us into becoming over-dependent beings (dependent on external material/religious/spiritual forces). Such collectives, with their

unresolved identity crisis, begin to resemble the features of fundamentalism that exist even otherwise, all around us.

In this part of the write-up, we are using the window provided by the seventh sutra for questioning and trying to understand the problems within the collectives. The seventh sutra might not have this as its main concern though this sutra does begin by saying; “**Do not lose yourself in dispersion and in your surroundings**”. This can be read as, “Be a part of a collective, but do not get dispersed, lose your criticality, mindfulness or individuality”.

They have always called for Tiep – that is connecting to positive currents everywhere, even when they are outside one’s sect (that is mostly the case). They always call for Hien – that is acting on ones own and not getting lost in conceptual constructs – the basis of sectarian collectives. Their call to surrender to buddha and sangha is – to move towards learning to discover and depend upon positive currents and connections within ones own self and everywhere else. It is the coming together of individuals in mutually enriching interrelatedness and criticality, building their positive ego that should be an inherent condition to the formation of an emancipatory collective. In the same way the result of the collective should be the growth and the strength of the individual. They are urging us to be conscious and wary of our own inner proclivities/tendencies of getting fused and enmeshed with the streams of negative collectivity. We have already discussed their concept of collective (Sangha) in P.

Our analysis here is limited only to how collectives get flawed or destroyed because of internal and invisible reasons. We are here not going into the external reasons, which are much larger, for instance, the manipulation by Domination (State, co-option, classism / casteism, Domination religion...). Those are more the concerns of the first and second domains.

[An illustration of a healthy relationship between the individual and organisation, where individual members could think and act independently, and even took major decisions that were against the organisation’s stand and decision – can be seen in “Sister Mai – Appendix-I-B” – a close look at life and decision making process in Tiep Hien (‘64-74).]

OUR REFLECTION on the EIGHTH & NINTH SUTRA – D-8 & 9

Struggling through discordant notes,

the bells chime to resonate with the song of a vibrant eco-system

Appeal for empathetic communication inside the world of emancipation

What is our community, our world? It is not more than our friendship/relational clusters, organizations or even *the movement*. It is also the vast and invisible world of resistance, all sorts of positive currents, streams and ecosystem, enmeshed always in Domination. It is the whole of the *Spring* in the *Desert*.

Tradition of activism often reacts to the code of 'minding your business', indifference, politeness, hypocritical *acceptance of all* that rules the 'civilized' world. Then, commitment to justice is seen as being outspoken, harsh condemnation of persons and organizations that we perceive as straying from the true path. Then, judging and criticizing becomes the hallmark of authenticity and radical wisdom. This tradition of activism, standing in polarity with the 'civilized' world, often gets blocked towards seeing the processes and conditioning of negative streams (normal society) influencing their psyche to become irrationally scrutinising, judgmental and paternalistic. We spend too much energy in criticising and labelling /stereotyping *others* – persons, trends and organisations. Ironically, we do it more if they are nearer to us – personally or politically. This, along with praising oneself/one's hero/group/stream seems to be too extensive in our *activist* culture. It cuts across all ideological shades! It is widespread in the non-ideological and informal terrain as well. We need to investigate this phenomenon that saps our strength so. We must realise that the warmth, empathy and connectivity of our community, the whole of the *Spring*, is the fountainhead of our effectiveness and vitality.

We describe here one mechanism that we see. Paternalism and hierarchy, so heavy, omnipresent and internalised in our society, suppresses our positive ego (individuality) by not allowing it to grow. This type of conditioning always situates us in juxtaposition with the *other*, as a superior or an inferior being. In this culture of constant comparison and competition, we, our *ego*, gets connected with all sorts of negative currents, further enhancing this vulnerable ego. We constantly get insecure witnessing strength in the *other*. As *half individuals* with a sense of worthlessness, we unconsciously begin to create an aura of our strength and self-righteousness. This we do by pumping up *our* authorities / hero /selves and pulling those of others down. Hereby, the tradition of non-appreciation and rubbishing gets deep seated in us. Somewhere we also begin to keep needing and getting addicted to this negative painting of the *other* (person or streams). Losing our understanding of the grey, we fall in the whirlpool of egotism, and yet ironically continue to believe ourselves to be more authentic than others. Such a belief of authenticity then inflates our self worth, hiding even more the inherent inadequacy that is built within the formation of egotism.

We can discuss on the basis of the wise old saying, "Hate the evil and not the person who does it". There is no permanent 'evil doer'. There are systems, negative currents that are everywhere surrounding us, that express themselves in this way or that. Recognising negative currents, striving to disconnect from them, needs always to be done. However, we must strive to do this "without causing discord" or unnecessary hurt. We also need to question the culture of judging, backbiting, labelling, stereotyping and junking the so-called evils-as-*others* as mostly negative and egocentric currents.

Moreover, while striving to stand against the negative currents we need to keep in mind the need to build up the positive currents of sensitivity, resistance, empathy, trust and warmth throughout the whole world of the *Spring*. It is a crucial fountainhead of our emancipation. Too often we are so harsh in criticising others that we foul up this fountainhead. We do it even when we are not sure of our 'facts', or without trying to understand with empathy the point of view, dilemma and existential crisis of the other.

Authenticity, commitment and on the other side sensitivity and empathy, are no polarities but woven together. It is understanding the colour of grey, the multiplicity in the ecosystem. To be authentic and standing against Domination and its co-option is not in contradiction with empathetically understanding the limitations and *fall* of individuals, groups and communities. Accepting and recognizing the limitations of the *other*, is striving against our egotism that might take us towards humility. It can help us to encounter our own ordinary self and *fall* in an understanding way. Thus, we have to learn to stand on the paradoxical ground of truthfulness: commitment to justice and sensitivity for the *other*.

OUR REFLECTION on the TENTH SUTRA – D-10:

Rebellion Against Domination

Also Against its Rules of the Game;

Striving to resist any type of personal or organisational power

[– We will discuss this below (p.), along with D-14 — reflection on the fourteenth sutra.]

(We are here skipping reflection on the eleventh sutra, D-11. We go to reflect on the twelfth sutra, D-12.)

OUR REFLECTION on the TWELFTH SUTRA– D-12

Preserving the sanctity of life: a struggle against war and its roots

Here, Tiep Hien begin from the traditional Buddhist command against killing. Then, step-by-step, they go beyond it. They rise to the heights of requiring the monks to strive *by all means* to abolish the *roots* of war. This can only mean, for our tiep hien, giving highest priority for social rebellion against Global capitalism, the US imperialism led military-industrial complex and Nation-Statism, right down to all communal/racist/national chauvinistic/Statist processes.

On one hand, this sutra calls for a thorough rebellion against the *lack of respect for life* by Domination and imposition of its will with large-scale violence (even against ‘terrorism’ and ‘dictatorships’). Then in the *interbeing* way, Tiep Hien ask, “What we can do to oppose the seed and soil of this tradition within us, in our organisational outlook and personal life?”

On the other side Tiep Hien try not to get stuck to doctrinaire pacifism. Like many of these currents, they do not give such a high priority to strive for peace that the struggles against material and social roots of suffering get a back seat. They give primary priority to both. In fact, in Tiep Hien outlook, all these struggles are inseparable. Opposition to war is seen in the context of opposing material and social roots of suffering. However, these roots of suffering should be opposed and alternatives should be created in such ways that do not create more suffering and violence in the long run.

Call for a struggle to uproot exploitation of all beings,

based on a mindful recognition of our inner proclivities towards exploitation

The first part is the standard call of Tiep Hien to practice in their own life what they oppose about Domination. They say, “If we are opposed to exploitation by capitalism, how can we grab other people’s property?”

It is unlikely that the above refers to the confiscation by the have-nots, of the ‘property’ of capitalists and colonialists. Their ‘property’ is after all the (exploited) property of *others*. Moreover, this loot of the exploiters is used to cause a chain reaction of further suffering. We are to remember that Tiep Hien are writing these sutras while opposing the US and the global capitalism for pillaging Vietnam, the world and the whole biosphere. This is made categorical in the last, operational part, “Prevent others from enriching themselves from human suffering or the suffering of other beings”.

Modern States today spend a colossal amount of money (out of the amount they plunder and profit from the people and Nature) for ‘development’, ‘welfare’ and ‘management of suffering’. Then, they organise disaster management to hunger alleviation, ‘safety-net’ projects for humans and ‘conservation’ projects for some lucky animals and forests – the victims of the mad profit hunger of the system. Thereby, an unimaginably massive amount of goodwill and prestige – legitimacy, stability and profit is made out of suffering and destruction. It is a ‘democratic’ and long-term compliment of the crude policy of, “Make war, destroy, and then reconstruct”, by the US.

We have to repeat that it was that far seeing manager of the rulers, Robert McNamara, who as the chief of the US war (and its failure) in Vietnam realised that *managing / Bank loaning relief and development* is an effective way to counter the Vietcong and even the Tiep Hien (64 – 74). It is a much more profitable way of exploiting and ruling in today’s context. Most of the time, it is more effective and profitable than making war. His shift from War department (Pentagon) to the World Bank in 70s was the symbol of this policy shift. More than 60% of the money for relief work for the poor of the US comes from the income on the interest on World Bank loans to the third world for ‘development and welfare’ there! Thus from the richest of the rich, right down to the vested interest in every big village in our country, profit is being made from the suffering of the poor. Chains of vertical pathways connect them, via States and its vertically connected NGOs. In fact, these vertical processes often ‘shepherd’ – co-opt, control and direct the much vaster people’s initiatives from below and horizontally organised NGOs. Can we stand for emancipatory compassion if we do not critically understand this ‘compassion and charity’ sector of *profiting from suffering*?

This sutra is also a call for questioning and protesting against the communist, nationalist or any other type of *Party States* those indiscriminately confiscate the property of others and colonise other societies and expand a power drunk bureaucracy and new rich. And what about those religious, social and political

organisations, which believe that, for their work of *emancipation* or service, they have a right to enrich their institution? In this world, every rupee is thickly polluted with discrimination and unequal exchange (whether visible or not), even in managing 'development', 'welfare' and 'suffering'. Here, how much and in what way can one enrich one's self/organisation, without causing, "Suffering to some human or any other being"? This is a clear call for a genre of emancipatory organising that worries deeply while acquiring wealth for the purpose of its activism towards equality. It is a clear call for avoiding *vertical growth*, with institution, name, fame and power-over-others, and upholding horizontal growth.

OUR REFLECTION on the FOURTEENTH SUTRA – D-14

On ethics of personal life, relationships, pleasure, support systems and Organisational traditions

[And also;

D-10, REFLECTION ON TENTH SUTRA – For Rebellion Against Domination

Also Against its Rules of the Game; Striving to resist any type of personal or organisational power]

What was Tiep Hien's vision of personal living, its support systems and organisational life?

We will discuss by comparing it with the major traditions of *organising life and living in society*, that is, (patriarchal) family/normal community, organised-religion and revolutionary (paternalist) organising.

Their concept of revolution (***understood by them as a permanent caring and rebellion***) gives primacy to praxis, positive *interbeing* at both personal and social and all the *organised* and *informal* levels. This is one fountainhead of their sutras. **So, to understand their evolution, we have to try to go into those times, and see their writings in relationship to their living, struggling and dying.**

Firstly, many of them left their families for monastery.

In the second stage, "*They left their monastic isolation*"... Then, they:

"organised the School of Youth for Social Service", "Van Hanh Buddhist University"... "Organised anti-War demonstrations, printed leaflets and books, ran social service projects, organised an underground for draft resisters, and cared for the innocent victims suffering during war"... Imagine doing all this when the wealthy of the world instead of donating money to you, are carpet bombing and propping up a savage autocracy, when you might get murdered just for speaking out. In fact, most of them died, "Some of them from self-immolation

(trying to raise public awareness against the imperialist war), some from cold-blooded murder, and some from the indiscriminate murder of war.”

OBVIOUSLY, TIEP HIEN (64 – 74) WERE VERY WELL ORGANISED. BUT WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF THEIR ORGANISATION AND LIFE?

Their life in many ways was a critique of the paternalistic family model.

In their sutras, Tiep Hien were even questioning the bringing of more children in such a grim world.

Moreover, clearly enough, Tiep Hien were opposed to those traditions of religion that ask us to surrender to some 'Higher authority', and play moral guardian to the state and family. Tiep Hien oppose these traditions boldly as they see in them empowerment of *vertical* relationships, *faith and accumulation*. These can often become so totalitarian that within their purview even sexual expression is forbidden.

Next, Tiep Hien also question the paradigm of organised revolution.

Why does *faith* in the revolutionary/scientific ideology or authority create distortions so similar to that of organised-religion? Tiep Hien point out this strange similarity between *faith and accumulation* (vertical growth, even for emancipation) paradigm of the organised-religion and the organised-revolutions — that in other contexts are so opposed.

Thus Tiep Hien suggest that any type of vertical, *higher* entities and *future* goals should not become our anchors. **These should not overshadow living at personal, mutual, horizontal and 'ordinary' levels, here and now.** Currents of compassion and anti-oppression at different levels of life (from personal to social) should be in positive *interbeing* — as in a complex ecosystem. **The ethical principles of compassion and anti-oppression for the larger societal categories should not suppress the practicing of these (principles) towards our own self, nor towards our near ones and others.** Engagement with the struggle against our egotism should not mean suppressing the world of joy that does not exploit others or deepens hegemony. However, at the same time Tiep Hien emphasise that respect and compassion for our own self should not lead to self-centrism and consumerism. Thus, empathy and respect for the desires, commitments and space of the other must always remain a cornerstone of all our relationships. Tiep Hien are forever opening up several different paths simultaneously and striving for a balance.

Thus Tiep Hien try to witness the pattern of negative connections of currents of egotism. They also learn to connect with the counter-currents, at all levels from personal to social.

Egotism at the personal level easily infiltrates and manipulates drives like *my prestige, my career/life, my emancipatory work, my family, my friendship, my romantic love*. Egotism at the social level similarly infiltrates commitments for *our religion / collective / deed / tradition / authority* and thereby can exploit our positive relationships, friendships and solidarity. Hence, the principle of opposing egotism must intervene at both these levels and needs to relate synergistically. This means, for instance, we must try not to exploit friendships and personal relationships for our personal egotistic needs or on the other side, even for *social commitments* —

whether for God, *good work* or revolution. **Friendship connections between persons and also between positive currents (flowing through the spaces of our self, relationships and society) are vital roots of empathy and solidarity inside the spaces of resistance.** Hegemonic and egotistic currents can for instance, infiltrate emancipatory drives and push feelings for our close ones in competition with compassion for social categories and causes. It tries to pit *rebellion* (opposing systematised oppression that causes much of the social distress) and the streams of compassion (for persons in distress) against each other. Here, hegemony infiltrates us dressed up in so many hues, subtle and adept in manipulating and fracturing our good intentions. These negative streams flow within and around organised-religion and the 'norm' of caste/society/paternalistic family (*commitment to my order / family*), or as capitalist egotism (*commitment to my self / my enterprise*), or even as organised-revolution (*commitment to our cause/Party*).

However, this is not the whole story. There does also exist innumerable positive links between compassion and rebellion at personal and social level (though mostly invisible). All these currents give life to each other via counter-hegemonic connections. These are the currents that we are to search, discover and link ourselves to. This becomes imperative if we are to fight against the different traps of hegemony — the negative *interbeing* of Domination.

Deeply grounded in their orientation of *empathy and nurture*, Tiep Hien oppose all individualistic and consumerist models. They also try to put back sexuality as a part of our humanity, taking it out of the tradition of *sexuality centric discourse, egotistic desire, patriarchal control and market*.

Possibly the anti-establishment gay and lesbian streams of the West can have no quarrels with their general orientations towards intimate and interpersonal relationships!

Can we say that the views of our tiep hien are like the *affinity group*, a term used earlier this century by the Spanish anarchists for their form of organisation as;

"A collective of intimate friends who are no less concerned with their human relationships than with their social goals. Indeed it is a new type of extended family in which kinship ties are replaced by deep empathetic relationships. Such a group overcomes the split between the psyche and the social world, and is based on voluntarism and self-discipline, not coercion and command. It should affirm not only the rational, but also the joyous, the sensuous, and the aesthetic side of the revolution."

"Affinity groups should only act as catalysts and not take a vanguard or leadership role. While remaining autonomous and local, they can federate by means of local, regional and national assemblies."

[Bookchin, quoted in Reference: DEMANDING THE IMPOSSIBLE...]

A LIMITATION OF OUR REFLECTION

In line with our discussion at the end of fourth sutra (p.), we here talk about another related limitation. Tiep Hien do not give us a large enough window to discuss the relationship between *friendship* and emancipation or the politics of intimate relationships. *Relationships* at the realm of personal self, (between) persons, (within) clusters and community, constitute another core terrain where various traditions of Domination/Hierarchy grapple with the emancipatory ones. Unfortunately, Tiep Hien have only the nodal categories of *self* and *sangha* (organizational community), society and “engagement with suffering” (axis of their Dhamma). A relationship, for instance any particular friendship, is not such a nodal category to them.

The philosophy of Tiep Hien has been crafted to understand processes that are more non-visible and fluid-like than solid structures. We have used this possibility to read and reconnect many hues in their write-up. However, beyond a point we could not go. In Tiep Hien everything is non-being, and in Interbeing. However, in such outlook, *interpersonal relationships* are more so (of non-being) than the *self* that gets far higher value in being assigned heavy commitments and meditational duties!

Here Tiep Hien seem closer to a large body of social and philosophical traditions however different from mainstream to emancipatory that are based on the paradigm of the centrality of *self* and *society* (or philosophical categories like *interbeing*, or societal categories like *humanity*, *class* & so on) whichever one puts at the top. These can include one’s *Dhamma*, consciousness or conscience, existential *project*, also the *Sangha* or Party. These traditions had dominated humanities, social sciences, psychological, and even medical discourses in the West for hundreds of years. Only in the 60s, we saw the explosion of awareness and recognition around spaces of *interpersonal*, celebrating *relationships* as autonomous beings, building beautiful relationships as a core emancipatory concern. It got reflected in radical philosophy too. They all began to move away from the deadlock of the old *war between class/oppressed community and society centric* paradigm of the Marxists/activists (from oppressed communities) and moral emancipatory streams on one side, versus the *individual centric* paradigms of the ‘normal’ society, discourse and exploiters on the other. Many streams like *deep ecology* do strive to overcome the centrality of *self* with a biospheric, *green self*. [– **See Appendix –III, Greening of the Self; Joana Macy, p.**] However, here too interpersonal relationships are not usually given a basic nodal seat.

For us, *relationships*, as mentioned above, are as much a core as the *self* or *society*. They are as real and *alive*, *having something like mind*, and as much a nodal constituency of concern as *self*, *society*, *sangha* or any *dhamma*.

(Now we go to – reflection D-10. As our discussion puts these reflections within a single theme, we will be discussing D-10 within D-14).

REFLECTION ON TENTH SUTRA – D-10

For Rebellion Against Domination

And it’s Rules of the Game

Against amassing any type of Personal or Organizational Power

Despite their similarities with revolutionary aims and organising, despite their radical critique of any God, Tiep Hien kept themselves organisationally closer to the tradition of *religious community* and not the *revolutionary Party*. Why?

This TENTH sutra is a model of their multi-frontal engagement. It is their commitment, not only against the *present structure* of Domination but also against its rules of the game. These are the 'norms' – particularly, the tradition of Domination and hegemony inside the spaces of compassion, resistance and personal life. This tenth sutra is their endeavour to celebrate new rules and different traditions.

On one side Tiep Hien call to struggle against oppression, the whole social ecosystem based on greed and hierarchy. We are called upon to pursue the struggle even if it puts us to the danger of losing all that we have.

On the other side, Tiep Hien call to lean against building up power-over-others, even within radical and personal spaces. They seem to be persistently affirming, *“Establishment is just not a structure outside our lives. It is also a ‘tradition of vertical growth’, power over others that flows everywhere across the society, within us too. Its soil and seeds legitimise all types of power-over-others and vertical growth. This legitimisation is subtle, complex and all the more dangerous for the rebel, whose emancipatory power is, in many situations, a good thing too. However, it is forever pushing us towards acquiring emancipatory power/respect/meaning over others – outside and inside the organisation. Empowerment of the have-not is of course one core imperative of emancipation. But we must have a tradition that can throw an effective counterweight against the relatively advantageous and smart within the movement getting an excess of power-over-others in this whole process. Above all, the activists, who already have /or have access to a lot of social power amongst the oppressed, must strive the hardest to avoid getting enmeshed in the vertical winds of power games.”*

Look at the interesting similarity they have with western anarchism on this point. Thus, Camus says: (not a quote, but his view referred to in DEMANDING THE IMPOSSIBLE)

“Neither Victims Nor Executioners”. *“Revolution changes little since it merely substitutes one set of masters for another (Footnote – 10, given in the end), whereas rebellion may change human nature by creating a new metaphysics (outlook/meaning) of morals. Rebellion protests against the absurdity, suffering and injustice and creates a moral value based on the idea of moderation. It implies recognition of the integrity of the individual and seeks relative aims in politics. Rebellion is the refusal to be treated as an object and to be reduced to simple historical terms.”*

Note that, instead of the term *Revolution*, the Tiep Hien spirit is better represented with the term *rebellion* that is one connection/current amongst many that is relentless, perennial and yet ever changing.

TIEP FOR TIEP HIEN

Everyone needs an appropriate pre-existing tradition to tap into to get one's nourishment, to legitimise and enrich one's praxis. They must have found it inadequate in the *Party* traditions of revolutionary socialism. Declaring yourself to be the Party (till the days of universal Truths of the 60s) meant that you had to also open yourself up to huge pressures of that specific tradition to become an instrument of power struggle, to expand and compete as, the "best father around", "The sole agency of revolution". How much could you then commit yourself to 'lesser' things like engaging with the myriads of suffering, *here and now*, deep commitment for inner change, rebellion at the personal level & so on? Are not these 'things' looked down upon as fads and fancies, 'impractical idealism/sentimentalism', diversions, obstinacy, 'bourgeois sensitivity' in mainstream revolutionary culture?

On the other side, precedents similar to Tiep Hien were there in South East Asia, in the little anti-establishment Buddhist/Zen/Taoist streams. **These strove to inter-connect the three worlds of the streams of compassion, rebellion against oppression, and lastly, striving against egotism.** So Tiep Hien made more connections with them. Believing in the principle of *being contemporary and practical*, Tiep Hien re-organised these classic traditions for their social moment.

Similar streams were present in India too. Let us look within the rebel current inside the bhakti /sufi /folk, dalit/peasants and other traditions. Many amongst them nurtured the streams of rebellion in the *subaltern* terrain ('lower' caste/classes, marginalized communities) since the medieval times. They were against expansionism of the brahmanical order or the Islamic State, and also against egotism at the same time. They had a symbiotic relationship with the *Informal sector* and ordinariness of life. They tried to combine the *inner* with *outer* change to some extent.

END OF APPENDIX – D (OUR REFLECTIONS)

END-NOTE/D-1 p.

Politics of mortality

From the beginning of human society, the inevitability of death, its gripping power on our psyche, personal and social life, has played a major role in organizing our culture, spiritual and material life. Different streams of encountering this reality have been further shaping our understanding of our existence and our psyche, self-awareness, meaninglessness/search for meaning, subconscious, and collective unconscious deeply in various ways.

Radical currents in psychoanalyses, existentialism, Buddhism, have exposed some crucial streams of egotism/dependency around how our relationship with our mortality, the inevitability of death, is organized. The fear of mortality creates deep insecurity. The desires to live, connect, relate, be with ourselves, our close ones is a real and a beautiful longing. But how this desire its consequent insecurities and our vulnerable ego was used and also manufactured by Domination, further enhancing and connecting the same to our egotism and insecurity needs our questioning.

To say it in a simple way, most hierarchical orders and the associated organized religions created an aura around this insecurity and trauma of death. Creating an environment that made us all 'independent', isolated beings, Domination alienated us from each other, Nature, and our mutual dependency, these visible and invisible institutions took us into a grand world that was much higher than life – a world where we forgot and also got alienated from our own helpless and ordinary beingness. We also forgot or did not learn how to mourn. We were made to believe in our re-incarnation or soul — our self that was beyond us. Instead of searching and creating meaning in our reality (environ), we were given an artificial overblown security/meaningfulness/selfhood. A flimsy 'grand selfhood', that becomes paranoid when hit by uncertainty – that then loses its ability to stand on the edge and understand, accept and live the trauma of death and its own disintegration as a reality. The new *self*, striving to live its precarious image, keeps *falling*. However, here the *institution* (cultural/spiritual Domination and its discourse) denies any strength, worth, meaning and respect to the *self* in facing its *fall*. Now the self remains in a constant fear of losing its grandiosity/worth – 'selfhood'.

This *self* is now desperate for support and consolation, and the institution showers down the means to block the facing of death and escape this predicament. The institution takes the *self* far away from mourning by showering on it all kinds of hopes dreams of immortality and meaning. This self can now gain security, worth and immortality, by surrendering to God or some omnipresent powerful authority — institutional Domination. All this organizes a deep egotism/dependency that is mostly moulded to the hierarchy espoused by the religion and the order. Other traditions of Domination are intermeshed with these processes.

Patriarchy and paternalism, intertwined with organized religion, blocked the *self* from encountering the reality and trauma of death by surrendering to the authority and protection of guardians, family, and sect power. Sons (or sect brothers) would keep revering their father (brother) and through them, the *self* would continue its 'bloodline' (family, sect power and so on). Only this could protect it from the deflation and end inflicted by death. Thus, the 'grand selfhood' under paternalism, subsuming the 'individual as a single unit', became the whole *individual* via its *lineage* (family, sect, community, party and so on). This mode is still strong in our deeply paternalistic Asia.

Most conventional traditions of Domination – Statism, casteism, racism, capitalism and its developmentalism would offer power, status, marriage, achievement/deeds, consumerism to block the non-purpose of birth and existence and ultimately the meaninglessness that death seemed to inflict on one as an *individual*. After all, did not many oppressive empires begin by building pyramids to make their emperors immortal? These ruling traditions seemed to be saying, "Death is not the end. Accumulate, create, leave your mark in the society – the bigger the better – so that everyone would revere you and you will get immortality. You are after all your property, your semen, your empire, industry, your deeds/karma and won't that continue after your death?" These streams of hegemony speak in many voices; Death defying courage of the soldier fighting for the state; missionary zeal; the scientist conquering Nature; artist building eternal monuments; 'dedication of the enterprise /empire builder'. On the other side, many streams within Domination gave all meaning to the understanding of ones life as, "You have one life, so consume and enjoy".

Most emancipatory traditions also seem to be blocked regarding the pervasive problem of not being able to mourn or relate to the trauma of mortality, its effect on our psyche, our stability and the politics of Domination. They might differ with the religious understanding of surrendering to God and faith around the original purpose and meaning of existence but then become obsessively worried and anxious around creating meaning in this meaningless existence. Thus, they too believe that currents of “surrender to greater truth/cause”, and the “deed and achievement” model to “rise above death” is correct, only it must be turned against Domination. “Those who create oppressive deeds are hated and forgotten. Those who do not rebel are forgotten too. Their death finishes them. Their death is as light as falling leaves. However, the one who leaves revolutionary mark on history is remembered, revered and celebrated – *his* death is heavy as a mountain, he lives forever in people’s mind.”

We are not questioning the revolutionary aspirations. The positive ego and strength that creates this commitment to reach beyond oneself is surely crucial and is a beautiful emancipatory spirituality. Nevertheless, the need to problematise this occurs, because this beautiful commitment also can get enmeshed in negative egotism. Though otherwise harmless, the visible and invisible desire to rebel, resist, strive for indispensability ... can also fall into a whirlpool where the need for “name, fame and power” to counter our basic insecurities and to fill our emptiness, creates an invisible string of competition which surrounds these aspirations in a very powerful manner. Here the subtle and invisible striving for immortality, flowing through the paradigm of Domination, creates the hierarchy between the ‘ordinary’ and the activist and then the greater and immortal ones even amongst them.

Breaking out of the block around mortality, being able to relate with the state of loss and agony and then being able to mourn, facing the irony of life and its consequent pain and anxiety have been crucial in many diffuse and invisible emancipatory currents. Streams within Buddhism and many other radical traditions have pondered most seriously on the agony of death and the experience of mourning. Thus, they have been saying, “Meditating on death and loss, witnessing it, we can strive better against the egotistic *self*, its attachments and power-drives as an anchor. The more we realize the nothingness of these categories, the more we can reduce our ego-block, detach ourselves from our self-centric being, and connect with others. We as separate beings do not have much meaning. The need is to understand our interconnection and interdependence.” These currents have shown how such acceptance can be a deep struggle against our need to be above ordinary, to be higher than others, more revered and remembered.

The beginning of the *fall* of the self/person-centred paradigm and immortality, the realization and acceptance that “I am as ordinary, helpless, vulnerable and mortal as the next being (even as ordinary and weak in many ways as the insect getting crushed under my foot), I was born without a purpose and my death will bring forth no meaning”, the realization that each one of us wants to keep living/connecting/relating/experiencing and is striving for the impossible, has the potential to bring forth some vital seeds of counter-hegemony. It has the strength to strive against our basic insecurities and egotism. It offers us humility that may take us towards some deep invisible connection. The *fall* of the self here, rather than taking refuge in egotism and Grand myths, may find its existential meaning in co-paining and mutuality. This *fall* may take us towards the

understanding that despite purposelessness there is some meaning in most ‘ordinary’ acts of life. Here the search for great meaning and the experience of ‘ordinary’, small struggles — even a little positive feeling for the other — intermingles.

The agony of mortality/loss, taking the shape of co-paining (with one’s own self and others), may help fight the pain of inevitability of death through the consciousness of streams and interbeing, celebrating the ecosystemic aspect of our self. Not via creating a block, rather living the trauma of loss, and then being able to mourn, the ‘ordinary’ self can merge itself in memories, nostalgias and streams of togetherness (here the pain of ‘dispensability’ – forgetting and getting forgotten, can strive to survive, in a conscious space of egalitarian memory and nostalgia).

ENDNOTE 2

FORGIVENESS

The process of empathetically understanding the victimizer can and should connect us with our anger and rebellion against Domination that creates the victimizer, victim, and also seeds of a victimizer within all of us. Activism directed inwards, like letting go of our anger and forgiving has another role in creating autonomy and empowerment. The tradition of oppression colonizes our mind by creating our desire to take his (the chair and persona of the oppressor) place, to become like him, to ape his values, to do onto him and others what he did to us/our community. This kind of revenge/fulfilment inspires new Dominations and spirals of communal militancy of all types. Anger and hatred against the persona of the oppressor (person or group/ethnic category), can fill up our minds so much with that we fail to explore the traditions that create him; we fail to explore our separateness. We get so engrossed in the passions of vengeance that we fail to explore and articulate our autonomy, our ethical/ cultural/ social traditions, to the extent possible at any moment. Thus, Gandhian, Tibetan liberation movement, and other traditions emphasize that, freeing us from our anger, creating forgiveness can create space for our mind to separate from the oppressor and grow autonomously.

Nevertheless, the same very process of empathizing and forgiving can also become so overpowering that we are left with little energy for empathizing with the victim and even for that matter our own selves as victims. In forgiving prevalent victimizers (specially before overcoming our victimization), there is always a possibility of our suppression of anger, crippling our psyche into complacency and submission and our getting co-opted into Domination. This is a major problem. Most organized religions impose this ethics of forgiveness packaged with acceptance of our oppression. Then we have innumerable traditions of Domination that engineer our streams of forgiveness into co-options of so many types, power drives and consumerism. Here the need to keep alive our anger, outrage against Domination and its traditions and structures becomes crucial. A necessary condition to create forgiveness is unleashing our outrage and linking up with the streams of rebellion against Domination. While striving to forgive, the need is also to struggle against Domination and its seeds even inside ourselves (at the level of our consciousness and spontaneity).

We stand for reclaiming the streams of empathetic understanding and forgiveness for emancipation. This means that vertical power, the power accessible to the victimizer, has to be engaged with relentlessly. In fact, without this journey against the spiritual, cultural, existential and material processes of Domination, and simultaneously, empowerment of the victim, empathy and forgiveness can become submission to the negative streams. It is in order to enrich and deepen emancipation, to broaden the ecosystem of resistance, spirituality, love/compassion/empathy that we conceive of understanding and forgiving.

Seeing forgiveness in the cocoon of high morality, as a commandment is to deny its complexity, its propensity of changing character according to its connection/environ. It is more grey, ordinary and jumbled-up, with all sorts of possibilities. Empathy, forgiveness, outrage, anger (against a particular victimizer) are so deeply woven that it is not possible to separate one and then see its shape. Forgiving is a striving that usually remains in its process, its completeness lies in its struggle. We outrage/we forgive; we are resentful and bitter; we strive to forgive and yet cannot; we forgive and step backward, the journey goes on. All that matters is what we strive to strengthen the ecosystem of emancipation, struggle against victimisation and Domination.

The South African revolution against apartheid regime has been one of the most successful experiments in organizing forgiveness. The journey of Nelson Mandela is a good example of how outrage against the system and compassionate understanding of the victimizer can be inter-combined so that they enrich each other. It shows how such mutual enrichment can minimize violence and destruction and yet create emancipation.

What made the work of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (in South Africa) meaningful? It shows that forgiveness is best created:

- As a part that is joined to the empowerment of the victims, uprooting of the structure of discrimination and disempowering the victimizer;
- In a situation where the victims can confront, encounter, and where the victimizer repents simultaneously.

This kind of connection that we have discussed above between repentance and forgiveness is specific in situations where there exists a significant hierarchical gap between the victim and the victimiser. We are here not going into the details of the problem of forgiveness in general – for instance, amongst close relationships, our past – where the victimiser in actuality is not present today, and many other situations.

FOOTNOTE TO APPENDIX D

1. This paradigm is most critical towards giving centrality or special priority to human species in the biosphere. It thus celebrates non-hierarchical diversity in biosphere as being crucial for stability and vitality of Nature. Ironically, this only makes it believe itself to be the most central and special entity in the 'eco-sphere of emancipatory paradigms'! It fails to see the role of the positive sides of the innumerable other emancipatory paradigms as being equally crucial for the health of the eco-sphere of emancipatory life and understanding.

2. It is the reverse of the one sidedness of conventional streams of 'organized resistance' that bother so much about opposing one social and root dimension of exploitation that they cannot seriously engage with other types of suffering – however disabling. One central query of our tiep hien is to examine how such contradictory one-sidedness and fracture flow like streams, grow and feed upon each other.

3. The need is to understand, how 'we', the 'non-sufferers' and 'non victims' in one context, are in another context suffering, victimized and made into victimizers by Domination. It is a struggle also for our own selves. We need to break our myth of our being a martyr who gets sacrificed while fighting for justice 'just' for others.

- It is from here that we need to come together with the victims in our struggle against Domination.
- It is to find where we can to some extent identify with their suffering, and yet not deny the specific victimization of the other,
- while striving against our identity as 'givers', coming to terms with our vulnerability we need to stand with the hindmost in their struggle.

4. The vision burns within

Your sympathy / Cleaves my dignity.
Your handouts / Sodden my determination.
Your answers to my problems / leave me dependent.
Yours tears / break down my strength.
I am person / I am not object.

I am person / join with me.
Sit down / close your eyes,
relax your mind, / become me
for one moment of your life, / and sense the power we can have / If we but see together.
Leave your sympathy behind / It is a burden / even you cannot bear.

For I have seen / in the worst of my suffering,
a vision of a new world, / build on justice and dignity.
I have seen the world / which can be
if we share the burden / of building it together.
Will you see that world / through my eyes?

Will you taste that world / through my suffering?
Will you use my pain / like cement
to anchor firmly / a time of peace and justice
which we build together? / The vision is mine.
It becomes / Ours.
When seen through common eye
– **Anonymous**

5. Hence, we are not devaluing all kinds of one-dimensional and often overwhelming pain that one goes through in specific and unique circumstances and moments of ones life. One may live with such pain for a short or a long duration, one may never be able to come out of it or someone might chose to live in it. Such pain cannot be always seen as egocentric and negative, though it can deplete us from co-paining with others and with different aspects of our own human self. Such pain can also make us self-centred, indulgent and vulnerable. On the contrary, in some circumstances the same might help in connecting with others. It can also be a gift, a special sensitivity. Such one-sided tendencies can be a corrosive burden, and can create massive problems at the individual level. But, seen from the point of view of the whole eco-system of emancipation, such pains can connect rare and valuable positive currents of feelings, sensitivity, insight in the *Spring*.

6. Of course there are many classes of pain that Domination does not create directly. However, most of such pain and co-paining is devalued by Domination. It erodes and blocks our emotions (for such paining) from deep within. Alongside, Domination organises society so that we cannot nourish each other and ourselves in pain. Instead we have to run to State, bosses, patriarchal and paternalist support systems, Gurus, therapists and market – the ‘painkillers’ of Domination. Domination makes us lonely, insecure and supportless by exploiting and destroying our psychic resources for each other and ourselves. The existential pain/co-paining that could have created a meaningful sharing, now under Domination’s control, and in our wasted condition, drowns us in misery or creates paralysis. In addition, Domination smothers many a pain with its ‘gifts’ of organized religion, paternalist community and ‘normal’ life, with its market of pleasures, addictions, Gurus, psychiatry. This is done at the price of our freedom and humanity.

7. Paul Brand and his team did path-breaking work in Tamil Nadu, understanding how leprosy damages human body and how to prevent and heal this. In 1950s, they overthrew the existing ‘truth’ that medical science (inspired by most organized religions) had believed for hundreds of years, that leprosy makes our skin, flesh and bone go ‘bad’, making them fester and rot. Brand’s team showed that the main culprit was the damage to the nerves, caused by the disease, making the affected parts lose the ability to pain. This is the key to understand the creeping disaster to the body.

In his book ‘Gift of Pain’, Paul Brand describes the crucial role pain plays in supporting our survival. We have to live in a world that is much more (physically) hard, abrasive, hot or cold, hazardous than what our delicate body can tolerate. Our body has evolved a way, a crucial gift of the process of evolution, so that it can encounter this world and yet not get damaged. Thus every time we walk, the foot and the leg keep shifting the site that got sore

and hurt, shuffling around and distributing the stress (of bearing the weight of the body, rubbing against and gripping the hard road). In this way, those sore spots get the chance to relax and recharge. Such simple protective manoeuvres are vital. They allow our body to walk as much as needed and yet not damage its skin and soft tissues. The guide for all this is our ability to pain. When this body's 'eye' can no more see, just by walking a bit wrong, putting repeated pressure on the same sore spot, we can injure ourselves. Repeated injury causes abrasion, wound and ulcer. The considerable self-healing abilities of our body are not impaired due to the disease. Normally, our body would be able to heal such injuries in no time. But now, these wounds cannot heal because of repeated trauma and injury to the same (affected) site, undoing our healing processes. Tissue destruction and rot follows. Thus, leprosy destroys our body parts, particularly the ones (like our foot and hand) that encounter the hazards of outer reality, by damaging our guide and protector – the sensation of pain.

We are saying something that is similar about pain and co-pain of our mind and soul. Connecting with such pain – in the body of society and our mind, our own and other's – learning to 'see' with the eye of pain is crucial. Rather it is blocking of this 'eye' that would damage us. This 'eye' enables us to come out of our shells and shackles to discover, explore and deal with a world that is far more toxic, traumatic and hazardous than we can tolerate individually. We can then face its corrosions and blows with less damage to our spirit, positive capacities of our mind, our relationships and our community. We will be able to distinguish between various types of pain and its messages. We will understand the *negative pain*, which corrodes our spirits and the strength of togetherness. We will be able to avoid the negative connections/currents of pain and yet grope around it to locate the positive ones. We will be able to relate with the positive pains that open so many doors to our empathetic sensibility and solidarity, gives us wisdom and connect us to beautiful positive streams. Co-pain, like a guide and protector, will help us to engage with its innumerable sufferings in such a wise way, pooling our collective strength that we may not crack-up or get desensitized and co-opted. It will help to share and distribute the stress of suffering so that we can link up, care and heal. It also will help to see the roots of suffering, to organize, act, and create our journey of compassion and resistance. – **'GIFT OF PAIN' – by, Dr. PAUL BRAND, DICK YANCY**

8. Anger (p.78)

The third domain grapples with yet another serious ethical dilemma of emancipation, the confusion surrounding the role of 'anger' of the victim. They see anger as having both positive and negative role/connection. Anger/outrage is not to be shunned or celebrated one-sidedly. Anger against one's oppressor and the negative system is an emotion that often helps one to come out of complacency, fear and surrender. Such *anger* also gives the strength and enhances emancipatory struggles, passions and rebellion. Thus, anger usually is not only inevitable but also valuable, and a strong need, especially in situations of harsh victimization in a system of Domination. Nevertheless the third domain questions 'anger' of the challengers getting stuck and blinded with an overblown hatred against any particular oppressor, person or a fixed flag, for instance – the current bosses of the system. They see this as a limitation that may blind the challengers to the processes of the system within. This, like hierarchy and up-climbing, egotism and dependency, values and morals, may lead towards co-option and degeneration. For in order to deepen the struggle against Domination and to protect 'anger' from falling within the shackles of totalitarianism,

egotism and arrogance – this positive, holistic anger while it is directed outwardly, it simultaneously also needs to focus inwardly, within the processes of the system inside us. Thus as stated above, while viewing rebellion against the system, the currents of associated “emotions” (feeling of outrage, victimhood) must also enable us to develop a self-critical sensibility, an ability to question the processes of the system, egotism/hegemony and their seeds inside and all around us.

9. By individual, we mean a flowing entity/structure — a process created by and creating the positive and negative streams, but who also contains, re-synthesizes (consciously and unconsciously – at the virtue of conditioning and resistance, experiences, emotions and bodily sensations, the psyche) and in the process also keeps becoming an entity by oneself. But this entity is not something fixed or completely rational.

Earlier we saw individual/human mind (seen as a machine) exist only at the virtue of conditioning and programming that could be engineered, reconditioned and re-programmed. But human mind is incomparable — very complex and subtle. — “it interacts with its environment by continually modulating its structure, so that at any moment, its physical structure is a record of previous structural changes.” (— **‘web of life’, Capra, p.267**)

10. Literature abounds in such ‘cynical realism’. One instance;

“Hurrah for revolution and more canon shots! / A beggar upon horseback lashes a beggar on foot.

Hurrah for revolution and canon come again! / The beggars have changed places, but the lash goes on! – **Yeats, “Great Day”**

END

Summarizing and continuing our discussion from the PREFACE, INTRODUCTION

Here, we want to emphasize one point again. We are not appealing for any de-emphasis in the work of what we have called here, the first and second domain of emancipatory discourse. A huge amount of work needs to be done and socialized here, and it is urgent. Each of the three domains is as crucial as the other, and all need to grow in an interrelated way. As the realisations of the first and second domain light up the third, the third domain adds vital insights to the other two. (Footnote – 1, given in the end)

What we are talking about is the tradition of the *mix*, the proportion of energy our theoreticians have devoted to each of these three domains. We are paining about the lack or near absence of discourse even language and concepts to articulate the *third domain*. This is particularly extensive in our country and seems to be so all over Asia. Consider the problems of mutual enrichment or its lack, within the organised streams and also amongst the organised and what we are calling the informal terrain. These are the problems of cooption, degeneration and conflict; problems of ethics and values, at the level of philosophy and life – pertaining not just to one stream or tradition, but also to the whole of the world of emancipation. These are hardly discussed in our printed words, magazines and booklets. We do not have any idea of how and where to begin. How to break this silence, this lack? How to shift this unhealthy *mix*?"

In what way, have we in India, explored the third domain?

How much have we studied the problems of mutual enrichment, introspection and pollution of power in the egalitarian and anti-Establishment terrain?

NO SYSTEMATIC DISCUSSION, NO APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE IN WHICH TO DISCUSS: THE ERA OF FRAGMENTATION, HELPLESSNESS, SILENCE AND DEPRESSION

There has been a sea of cursing and lamenting, going in circles, rivers of frustrations, rage, burnout and breakdowns in and around the *organized* streams of rebellions. Rather than giving birth to systematic discussions that could enable us to review the past, connect and grow, the above situation drowns and paralyzes us (particularly in those states where the *movement* was strong earlier (Footnote –2, given in the end).

One basic *lack* that gives rise to this situation is, we cannot express (formulate) most of these experiences in the language (*theory*) of revolution created in the past, i.e. the *first domain*. Those theories and conceptual tools were mostly constructed to critically examine *external* realities, the global and social structures of Domination.

Even streams of the *second domain*, the study of the construction of 'consent' and hegemony in people (the oppressed) and on the other side, their resistance, began much late in India. Subaltern /dalit / adivasi /women's studies began in late 70s. Then, 80s saw beginning of the studies of how communalism, patriarchy,

caste system, along with capitalism shape the mind of the oppressed, how they get drawn in reproducing these traditions and how they resist too. However, these remain rudimentary till today.

Moreover, what remains strange is, even these (the realisations of first and second domain) are hardly being applied to the *spaces inside the movement*. When studies critiquing emancipatory streams are made, the self-critical/introspective dimension is weak. Moreover, it is not done in any holistic manner. Marxists, dalit initiatives, Gandhian/socialists mostly use their understandings to find the one-sidedness and faults of *other* sister streams. We are drowned in the tradition of blaming the *leaders and lines*.

Exhausted activists say, "*We have done enough of State-character analysis, now we must learn to look at our inner state*". *But how? Where are the appropriate traditions, language, philosophy, theory and concepts, to do this?*

Even if such language has emerged in many places around the world, we do not know about it. Also, it is possible that such language has been formulated in ways that we are not familiar with or is not available to most of us. Moreover, often, such sensibilities, awareness and language are fragmented and formless, like a mist of so many colours, rising from too many places. How can we see it if we do not have the appropriate eye?

Thus, there is an abyss between our experience and available theoretical language. Absence of such a language denies us the means to express and share our miseries, to pool our resources together and to (collectively) review, overview and connect with the experience and realisations of so many different streams that flowed in different places and in different historical moments. However, without such social sharing and pooling, how can we build up an appropriate tradition and language? This deficiency cripples us further. It blocks us from making reviews and learning at social, historical and holistic levels. It blocks us from making sense of our personal experiences. Tragically, without such reviewing and understanding, the painful fire of our experience, the *fall* of our initial dreams lead to more burnout, depression and paralysis.

There has been some expression in literature though. Satinath Bhaduri's *JAGORI* (English translation by Lila Roy –*VIGIL*) – 1942 and later his novel *DHORAI CHARIT MANAS*, were the forerunners of this tiny introspective current in Bengal. A host of such literature and few cinematic efforts (for instance *Mukha Mukham* and *Amma Aryan* from Kerala) do exist. But these are more into posing, paining, and highlighting the problem rather than directly hinting at a new language, though in a subtle way these are saying very similar things.

In fact at the level of theory, we have come across only one book in India — ***SOCIALISM AND POWER*** - by Sachinanda Sinha, (Orient Longman Press, **1974**) - which tried to raise what we are calling the concerns of the third domain to some extent. We are eager to know more of such works. We must confess that we haven't done much research.

WHY SUCH BLINDNESS TILL 1960S AND 70S AND EVEN AFTER?

We can mention a few reasons for this.

That was the era of the cold war, super-power rivalry and paranoia. Establishments and their media had kept up a strident campaign, which propagated that, the Marxist and all revolutionaries *are more power crazy and inhuman than the old rulers, and politics is a dirty word*. The 'normal' society saw the revolutionaries as people who needed to be given psychological treatment.

This had contributed largely in making us, particularly in the Marxist traditions, defensive, reactive, blocked and immune to introspection. We regarded all streams of self-criticism that were insightful in pointing at the seeds of Domination within us with suspicion - as *reactionary, bourgeois and inimical*.

Conventional thinking and normal psychology (whether pedestrian or clinical) did not question the madness of the 'normal' but were questioning, labelling and analysing the rebel and revolutionary – the 'deviant' in the society. The rebel was vilified or worshipped in small pockets, but was always abnormal. This kind of defamation by convention (or adulation in minor pockets) further blocked us to the positive streams of self-analyses.

Perhaps the negative strength of paternalism ('guardian-ism') was even deeper. We would always block ourselves from seeing our problems, on one side by blaming *others* — “the bad/sold-out Leader/Father/Guru, villains and their *wrong paths*” and on the other side, by hiding behind the 'grand figures' – worshipping the great authorities/traditions/morality/ideology ... The heat of blaming the “bad Leaders” would hide the whole dimension of hegemony as dependency on 'good' authorities. Thus, Gandhians, Socialists, Marxists, even dalitists, all could see and blame the power pollution, *but only amongst the 'others'*.

Individual growth was seen (by the paternalistic tradition) as *individualism* and it was never encouraged in the movement. Standing on insecure spaces, admitting that there is nothing as “the correct path”, and facing our egotism had no precedent in our traditions of liberation.

Friends say, “The tradition of Queen Victoria (our British colonial heritage), Father Stalin (and later, Mao) on the soil of brahmanical paternalism created *guardianism* of a type difficult to imagine outside Bengal and Asia.” The glory or the lost glory of grand authorities, the omnipotent power for good or bad, imprisons or blinds our gaze. This keeps the vast humanist and libertarian traditions that flow in our society but outside authoritarian streams, substantially unseen, uncelebrated, unconnected and paralysed. Even today, after repeated breakdown of our dreams since 1920s and 40s, 50s, 70s and 80s, people do not want to face the record of history. Compassionate activists, veterans of ten, twenty, thirty, forty years, bury their old emancipatory dreams, deny, dropout, become silent, go into depression, breakdown, try suicide, commit suicide. But amongst most of them, thinking and acting on their own, making theories to fit our experience instead of letting inappropriate theories blind us (*cutting the foot to fit the shoe*), trying to walk outside the official 'Highway' is forbidden territory. We do not have any tradition of trying to look at the reasons of failures *inside us*. It is as if some hidden force still makes us wait for some “Godot”/Great Guru (a new Marx, Mao, Gandhi or Ambedkar or their combination) to come and wake us up.

THINGS HAVE CHANGED A LOT SINCE THE 70s.

surfacing

Our classification of social initiatives as the old *organised sectors* with their mindset of, “We are the True Path” on the one side and the *informal sector* on the other is but one of the so many ways of describing emancipation. Moreover, this is only one aspect of the reality.

There is another aspect too, which has always existed. We can call it an *intermediate sector* that did not have the grand aim and arrogance of the old organised sectors and that related more equally with the *Informal sector*. It was dim in holistic self-awareness, badly fragmented. It existed as mass organisations, small political parties and groups, initiatives by social formations (party or religious), friendship clusters, citizens initiatives, NGOs that are not vertically organised (by government/parties/corporate institutions) small groups and their connections, as issue specific mobilisations, victim’s organising and so on. These are often initiated by one or few individuals, are often unstable, vulnerable to personal egotism and co-option of all types. Nevertheless, this *intermediate sector* has always been there.

In fact, what is most instructive is the ability of this sector to survive and grow despite tremendous odds. We can surely see hope in this. *In Europe, this intermediate sector had possibly out-grown the organised sector by the 60s, if not earlier, in subversive creativity.* In Bengal, where the *organised sector* had got too much legitimacy and social power, the *intermediate* terrain was weak and mostly invisible (as compared to other states).

In India, since 60s and 70s, there were many reasons that created a collapse in the legitimacy of older *organised sector*, particularly at the national level. Some of these were, the growth of connection and awareness at the lower level, decay of paternalism, initial success and subsequent degeneration of the old national level Parties (nationalist, Gandhiite, Marxists, socialist, dalitist...) and even regional movements like that of the dravidian, adivasi or peripheral and oppressed national minorities.

After many false beginnings in 1970s and 80s, these ‘orphan’ *intermediate* streams have been growing considerably. They have grown at local levels, in the workers, women’s, dalit, adivasi, village and urban communities, usually as small and autonomous initiatives, mass organisations, political or single issue campaigns and their associated NGOs, in social, political or religious formations. They have grown in small socialist political formations; as currents in socialist mass fronts, co-ordinations and parties; as currents in religious-social streams like neo-buddhist, Christian socialist, ashram/community work traditions close to Gandhiite or other traditions; as individual initiatives and alliances for helping sufferers, against corporate rights abuse/plunder of people and environment; as alliances against corporate globalisation, communalism and so on.

Many realisations discussed by our *tiep hien* are common in this terrain. However, the main difficulty today is the poor communication amongst such initiatives. This is particularly so across different types of issue based organising, in different social terrains. This is practically non-existent at the cross-regional level. Where such networks and communications exist, they are rarely able to give space to basic theory, particularly what we are calling the concerns of the *third domain*. Hence, compared to the malignant power of the *Globalised Desert*, such a *Spring*, of what we are calling the *intermediate level* is badly fragmented and practically invisible. This

is particularly so for the vast majority of concerned people, who have less opportunity to access broader and global information.

LACKING A CLEAR AND COMMON LANGUAGE / AWARENESS, THEY ARE USUALLY INVISIBLE TO EACH OTHER

So far, all the *intermediate sectors* and the diffuse streams of realisation mentioned above are failing to articulate themselves with some clarity and link at the deeper, larger, cross provincial and the global levels. The tradition of conceiving revolution as a whole ecosystem of emancipation is all time low. We strongly believe that there must be many groups and currents of concern that think about all this. But, we hardly know of systematic dialogue for such self-critical assessment at provincial or larger level amongst such currents (within the sectors of social initiatives that are not primarily vertically funded)!

All these make the pain of the burnout and broken dreams terribly paralysing. In Bengal it looks as if the positive streams of the organised sector of the social revolution, along with their holistic vision, are becoming an *extinct species*. If we cannot make a leap in our outlook and connections, what chance do we have against the modern Establishment - against its global market, corporate sector, State/mainstream parties, welfarist establishments, the vertically funded and organised NGOs, Human Rights sector and, on the other extreme, fundamentalism, communalism/nationalism!

THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED UTTERLY SINCE 60s

The blind faith in revolutionary *fathers and paths* of the earlier era is collapsing. But rising in its ashes is blind faith in individualism, commerce or authoritarian fundamentalism. The hierarchy in this era after the 'big revolution' is like a storm, going deep inside the people, even the lowermost.

Direct engagement with suffering, a central key to vitality for the Tiep Hien is drowned in the ocean of professional / commercial social welfare sector and the 'alternate', spiritual sectors of contemporary establishment. Taking advantage of the lack of political awareness, communication and connection, stable social and economic support, utter fragmentation and demoralisation of the *organised, informal and intermediate* sectors of emancipation – the establishment is making attempts for a sweeping take-over in this terrain. It is like a war without the visible opponent! Scramble for getting government power has become the *end* of revolutionary struggles. What is worse is, there is no clear alternative. UN, World Bank, ... all sorts of agencies of global establishment, its third world party/cliقة/governments are trying to co-opt this immense autonomous terrain – naming, philosophising and organising it as the "people's government" and the vertically organised NGO sector. Innumerable initiatives and mass organising from below, small political and social groupings, NGOs associated with them are of course defying it.

In this situation, improving lateral, horizontal communication amongst concerned people that is multi-coloured, extensive but introspective too is crucial.

FOOTNOTE TO END

1. For instance, a major problem of the third domain is to study the co-option and fossilisation of the anti-colonial, socialist, Marxist and other movements of the past. This is so, in India, Asia, even in far-flung places like Mexico or South Africa. Do they not constitute much of our ruling parties and the state, its language, behaviour and strategies?

2. Look at provinces like Bengal, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar where 'Marxist' and 'socialist' parties have been ruling more or less perennially since the degeneration of Congress (in 70s). BJP does threaten them, but the so-called communist and socialist parties have massive power till today.

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We will give here names of very few authors and books that have raised similar concerns, or have been used by us often.

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Life and times of the original Tiep Hien

Glimpses of Buddhist resistance in Vietnam 64 – 74; extracts from:

Love in Action – Thich Nhat Hanh

p.57, – ENGAGED BUDDHIST READER, *Ten Years of Engaged Buddhist Publishing*: Ed. Arnold Kotler Parallax Press, Berkeley, CA, USA;

...

During our struggle, many scenes of love arose spontaneously (a monk sitting calmly before an advancing tank; women and children raising their bare hands against barbed wire; students confronting military police who looked like monsters wearing huge masks and holding bayonets; young women running through clouds of tear gas with babies in their arms; hunger strikes held silently and patiently; monks and nuns burning themselves to death to try to be heard above the raging noise of the war. And all of these efforts bore some fruit.

Any non-violent action requires a thorough understanding of the situation and of the psychology of the people. In Vietnam, we inherited many ideas from the Buddhist tradition and we learned from our mistakes as we went along. ...

...in 1966 when the people of Hue[^] and Danang learned that Field Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky was about to bring tanks and troops from Saigon to suppress the movement for peace, the people of those cities brought their family alters (the most sacred objects in their homes (onto the streets, relying on their culture and tradition to oppose the forces of destruction. Some people were critical, saying they used religion for political purposes, but I do not agree. They were using their most potent spiritual force to directly confront the violence. ...

... When Thich Tri Quang fasted for 100 days, those who passed the Duy Tan Clinic were jarred into awareness, and compassion was born in them. As a result, they felt compelled to meet, talk, and plan, thereby escalating the struggle. ...

We also used literature and the arts as "weapons" to challenge the oppression. Works by antiwar writers, composers, poets, and artists, although illegal, were widely circulated. Antiwar songs were sung in streets and classrooms, and antiwar literature became the largest category of books sold in Vietnam, even infiltrating army units. Look Back at Your Homeland, Only Death Allows You to Speak Out, and Lotus in a Sea of Fire sold hundreds of thousands of copies. Our literature was considered dangerous by both the sides...

During the superpower confrontation in Vietnam, while thousands and thousands of peasants and children lost their lives, our land was unmercifully ravaged. Yet we were unable to stop the fighting; we were not able to make ourselves heard or understood. We had little access to the international news media. People thought we Buddhists were trying to seize power, but we had no interest in power. We only wanted to stop the slaughter. The voice of the Vietnamese people (80 percent Buddhists) was lost in the

melee of shooting and bombs. But we realized that the means and the end are one, and we never employed any kind of action that betrayed our commitment to non-violence.

In 1963, Venerable Thich Quang Duc went to the crossroads of Phan Dinh Phung, sat in the lotus position, poured gasoline on himself, and transformed himself into a torch. ... (this) awakened the world to the suffering of the war and the persecution of the Buddhists. When someone stands up to violence in such a courageous way, a force for change is released. ... Buddhist leaders always tried to prevent it. But many monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen did sacrifice themselves for peace in this way, including my disciple Nhat Chi Mai, who declared that she wanted to be "a torch in the dark night."...

What is important is not to die, but to express courage, determination, and sincerity (not to destroy but to create. Suicide is an act of self-destruction based on the inability to cope with life's difficulties. In Buddhism, self-destruction is one of the most serious transgressions of the precepts. Those who burned themselves had lost neither courage nor hope, nor did they desire non-existence. They were extremely courageous and aspired for something good in the future. They sacrificed themselves in order to seek help from the people of the world. I believe with all my heart that those who burned themselves did not aim at the death of the oppressors but only at a change in their policy. Their enemies were not human beings, but intolerance, fanaticism, oppression, greed, hatred and discrimination that lay within the hearts of their fellow men and women.

We did not plan self-immolation or any of the methods that were used. But confronting the situation and having compassion in our hearts, ways of acting came by themselves.... Many other tactics were used ... Foreign minister Vu Van Mau, for example, resigned in 1963 and shaved his head to protest the violent policies of the Diem regime, and many professors and students followed suit. There were labour strikes at the harbours and markets, and business owners turned in their licenses. University deans, presidents, and professors resigned, and high school and university students boycotted classes and examinations. Draftees refused to fight. All of these acts were met with atrocious reprisals. The government used unbridled brutality (tear gas, suffocation gas, grenades, prisons, and torture (to obstruct and suppress these non-violent efforts.

Police agents posed as monks and nuns and infiltrated our movement, damaging our prestige and sowing seeds of fear. They excited extremists and fanatics to overturn and destroy the leadership and members of the movement. No one knows exactly how many Buddhist and non-Buddhist leaders of the non-violent movement were imprisoned or killed, including professors, students, intellectuals, politicians, workers, and farmers. Even social workers trying to help the peasants were terrorized and murdered. From the School of Youth for Social Service, eight people were kidnapped, six killed, and eleven seriously wounded (all because they refused to take sides in the war.

...Despite the results (many years of war followed by years of oppression and human rights abuse (I cannot say that our struggle was a failure. The conditions for success in terms of a political victory were not present. But the success of a non-violent

struggle can be measured only in terms of the love and non-violence attained, not whether a political victory was achieved. In our struggle in Vietnam, we did our best to remain true to our principles. We never lost sight that the essence of our struggle was love itself, and that was a real contribution to humanity.

Life and times of the original Tiep Hien

Days and Months (SISTER CHAN KHONG

P.111, ENGAGED BUDDHIST READER, *Ten Years of Engaged Buddhist Publishing*: Ed. Arnold Kotler Parallax Press, Berkeley, CA, USA

It seems like only yesterday that I stopped by to see my dear friend, Nhat Chi Mai. Mai was a sister in the Dharma, my closest fellow traveller along the Buddha's path of understanding and love. Whenever she spoke, her voice was filled with affection and a unique blend of innocence and wisdom that my friends and I began to call "the special accent of Mai." "Where have you been? You're all covered with sweat," she said to me, with her eyebrows knit and her lips pursed, like a mother worrying about her only child.

"Do I look as if I've been working in the rice fields? I've just come from Tan Din Market collecting pledge money from our school's supporters." Mai laughed and served me a large glass of cool water – exactly what I needed that hot July day.

Her dress was as simple as a nun's robe, and it made her look especially beautiful. After a moment, I became serious and asked Mai what she thought about Thay's appeal for peace. She sat silently, and then, stroking my hair, she said, "You I love and respect Thay, especially his vision of social service, but his political activities worry me."

I understood. Thay's appeal for a cease-fire and the withdrawal of American troop[s] was still very early. A "nationalist" wouldn't dare demand such a thing, and our government and newspapers condemned him. As the youngest in her family, protected by her parents Mai had never even seen a bombed village, so how could she not worry when the radio, newspapers, and even the President himself accused Thay of being a communist?

Anxiously, on the verge of tears, I said, "Please consider this, dear sister. The Buddha taught us not to take life, so how can we sit by while our people kill one another? For 4,000 years, our country has defeated every single invader. Why do we need the help of foreign troops now? Mai, do you know that when Thay's 'Prayer for Peace' was printed in the Buddhist Weekly, I asked the Executive Council of the Buddhist Church to support eight of us in a fast until death as a prayer for peace? But the Council did not approve, and, without their backing, we knew that our act would be useless."

"Of course they wouldn't approve!" she interrupted. "Who would care for your aged mother?"

"I know that I would commit the sin of impiety towards my mother by killing myself, but if my death could help shorten the war and save lives, I would be willing to pay for the sin of impiety in another life."

Mai sat still for a long moment. Then she took my hands, looked deeply into my eyes, and said, in a determined voice, "Dear younger sister, you are right. If there is ever another opportunity to fast for peace, count on me to join you." The sincerity of her words moved me so, and I wept.

Three months later Mai joined our work for peace at Van Hanh University. As the daughter of a well-off family, this kind of "underground" work was new to her, but with copies of Thay Nhat Hanh's book, *Lotus in a Sea of Fire*, hidden in her white Volkswagen, she delivered ten to this

school, twenty to that, and through her efforts, V's book make its way into the hands of almost every teacher and student organization in Saigon.

One Saturday, during our weekly Day of Mindfulness, Mai invited me into her room, took my hand in hers and said, "Younger sister, I have an idea. Remember how the eight of you wanted to fast for peace? What if I and one other person joined you, and ten of left a statement for peace and then disembowelled ourselves? Our act could reach many people, and it might move them to end this dreadful war! Fasting and even self-immolation no longer wake people up. We have to be imaginative!" I was shocked, but I promised Mai I would consider her proposal.

I stayed in my room for four days, weighing the pros and cons, and finally I told her that I thought we shouldn't do it. The eight of us had been single when we proposed the fast for peace. Now all the others were married, and some lived far away. I suspected that there would be only Mai and me. "The peace movement is still too weak," I said. "If we sacrifice ourselves, the only thing we can be sure of is that our brothers and sisters in the peace movement will be without us. And we promised Thay Nhat Hanh that we would help Thay Thanh Van manage the School of Youth for Social Service, at least until the first students complete their training." Mai knew that the financial crisis of the SYSS (School of Youth for Social Service) was critical after Thay Nhat Hanh's departure. If we two, the main fundraisers for the school, died, who would care for the students? I spoke with all my heart and she agreed to abandon the idea, although she wanted to wait for the final work from Thay Nhat Hanh. She had sent him a letter but hadn't received a response yet. A week later, she cheerfully told me that Thay had written back forbidding the sacrifice.

Feeling a great sense of responsibility for the SYSS, Mai said to me, "We need to work as much as we can. You must make me work harder. You are so good in your work in the slums, the peace movement, and the school. I wish I could be more like you." I held her shoulder tenderly and said, "Dear elder sister Mai, each person is unique, and you are a beautiful flower. There is no need to be like anyone else, especially like me!" At the beginning of the second year of the SYSS, we were having a severe financial crisis. When Nga and I collected more sacks of rice than Uyen or Mai, Mai reproached herself, but her disappointment caused her to be even more diligent in starting self-support projects for the school. Each week, she presented a new list of proposals.

Thay Nhat Hanh was far away, and no one had taught us Avalokiteshvara's great art of listening or the Buddha's art of Sangha building – living in harmony with those around you. So, instead of sitting with Mai, listening deeply, and kindly showing her the strong and weak points of each proposal, we became impatient and ignored her. Many people would have felt frustrated and accumulated internal wounds that might explode at some time, but Mai seemed able to look deeply into herself and heal and transform each wound with ease.

Every week, she would propose something new. In a soft voice, she said to me, "Phuong, if you are free Monday, please come with me to the rice market. We can buy large quantities of rice and then sell it in smaller amounts to raise money." The next week she would suggest, "Phuong, perhaps we can sell soap to the families that support the school." And the following week, she would have yet another plan, and the next week another. Her proposals were not particularly wise, but I did not want to hurt her, so I didn't say anything. Then one day, when too many *silent disagreements had accumulated in my mind's "store consciousness," I answered in a very irritated way: "just go ahead and do it, Mai! But don't force me to do everything with you. I have my own work."*

As soon as the words left my mouth, I regretted them, but I could not take them back. At dinnertime, I walked up behind Mai, hugged her, and said, "Where would you like me to go Monday?" she smiled sweetly, and I knew she bore no grudge. The next Monday we went to the soap market together, and on Tuesday we went to the home of a sponsor to sell our soap. On Wednesday we picked up rice, and it was only on Thursday that I got around to my own work. Mai could have done those errands by herself, but she always insisted how much fun it would be to do things together.

To satisfy Mai, Uyen and I would have had to spend two or three days each week just accompanying her. Looking back, I wish we had done so. But at the time, we grumbled to each other, "We spent 1,000 piasters on rice, carried it across the city in traffic, and arrived at the home of a sponsor to sell it for a profit of fifteen piasters, while it cost us eight piasters for gas, and took the whole morning! I could earn 300 piasters an hour teaching math." Uyen and I had not yet learned the joy of just being together with a friend, the work, the rice sellers, and the sponsors. Uyen and I did not know how to practice peace with every step, but it seems that Mai did. With or without us, she embarked on many projects just to earn small amounts of money for the school. Then one day, she touched the heart of a wealthy man with her gentle way of being, and he gave the school 20,000 dong that we used to start many self-supporting projects. Little by little, we repaid the construction loans, and the sponsors' pledges were again used to buy food.

One evening after we had recited the Tiep Hien precepts, I suggested that we build a bungalow with six tiny meditation rooms for each Tiep Hien brother and sister to use for a half-day solitary retreat every week. I knew that would be a real treasure. Uyen and the other brothers and sisters were overjoyed by the idea, but Mai opposed it, that it would be too much of a luxury to have our own rooms. I did not want a fancy building, just a palm-leaf and bamboo hut, a place to be alone to calm our emotions after six days of strenuous work.

Mai sat silently and then reminded us that we did not have the money and that if we did, we should use it for the school, not to build a house for ourselves. I was afraid that if we did not build this bungalow, we might lose ourselves and be unable to serve anyone. Seeing my determination, Mai finally agreed. At times, I felt she did not understand my suffering. I suppose that was because she lived on a different level from most of us. She always seemed refreshed and in touch with her deepest self.

To raise money, I began by asking my older sister, "Nam, if I get married, how much will you give me as a wedding gift?" my family had been concerned about me not getting married, so when Nam heard this, she answered right away, "Three thousand piasters!" "That's all?" I responded, "How about 5,000?" She said "Okay, 5000." I put out my hand and said, "For people who want a family, a wedding is important. But for someone who wants to be a resource for many people, having a special room to quiet her mind is equally important, don't you agree? How about giving it to me right now so we can build a bungalow for a solitary retreat?" Nam laughed and gave me 3,000 piasters.

Mai donated 5,000 piasters of her own money, and with a few other donations, we were able to build a small house. Uyen and I always had a simple arrangement of

bamboo or wildflowers in our rooms, while the flowers in Mai's room were always arranged in the formal, traditional way. Every time I entered it, I was struck by the resplendent Buddha on gold paper hanging on her wall (the Buddha sat in a full lotus, surrounded by clouds, flowers, and a halo (and a set of eight pictures of Thay Quang Duc. Mai also had a hanging pot with a branch of golden plum flowers and one bright red, plastic rose. It was exactly like entering an old-style nun's room, except that her bed always had many covers and a pink satin pillowcase (appropriate for the favourite daughter of a well-to-family!

One day Mai entered my room and exclaimed, "Your room is so sad. There are no pictures at all here." When she looked more closely, she noticed a tiny photo of a lake and a forest just above the floor, and near my bed, at eye level, sketches of crying children.

Surprised, she asked, "Why are the pictures so close to the ground where no one can see them?" I answered, "I did not arrange the room for others. I placed the pictures low so I can see them when I lie down." Mai shook her head and said, "How selfish!" When she accused me of being selfish, I felt angry, but my irritation dissipated quickly when I remembered how different her nature was from mine. We laughed, and everything was fine.

One Saturday in April, when it was Mai's turn to read the Precepts of the Order of Interbeing, her voice faltered as she said, "Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life and build peace." From that moment on, she spoke so softly it was nearly impossible to hear her. As we were putting the precept books back on the shelves, Uyen asked, "What happened, Mai?" And I added, "You seemed to lose your concentration during the recitation. Are you all right?" Mai just smiled and returned to her room early that evening.

The following two Saturdays she did not come to our Days of Mindfulness. Because the situation in Saigon was so dangerous (I assumed that her parents had forbidden her from spending the night with us. But when she didn't show up for a third Saturday, I thought that even if her parents wanted her home at night, they would certainly let her recite the precepts with us in the afternoon.

I wandered if something could be wrong, yet, at the same time, I was upset with Mai for not taking our Days of Mindfulness more seriously. At least she could have told us why she had missed the SYSS staff meetings, the Days of Mindfulness, and her work at the university.

Then, on Sunday, May 14, 1967, she came to her last Morning of Mindfulness. I was in my room, looking out the window onto a field of green bamboo, and I didn't hear her car pull up. Uyen knocked gently at my door and said, "Sister Mai is here, wearing a beautiful violet ao dai with gold embroidery!" I stood up and walked slowly from my room, intending to reproach her. But as I entered the hallway, I saw Mai surrounded by friends. All trying to tell her something, and then, like baby chicks with their mother, we all followed her into the dining room.

Mai's hair was arranged beautifully, and her new dress made her look as if she were about to attend a ceremony. Right away, she began slicing the banana cake she had baked especially for us. I smiled and said, teasingly, "First you abandon us for three

weeks, and now you dress so beautifully and bring a delicious cake! Are you going to get married!" Others joined in, "Very possible! Mai looks so pretty today!" We all laughed, but Mai just smiled silently.

I felt disappointed that, once again our dream for peaceful social change was being pushed aside. So many young friends shared our aspiration, but then they married and had children, and always had excuses for not helping with the work. Now Mai was going too. At that moment, her voice pierced my thoughts, "Sister Chan Khong, please come to Tu Nghiem Pagoda early on Tuesday morning. It is Wesak, the Buddha's nativity, and something interesting will happen."

Mai was always kind to the old nuns at the pagoda, so I thought she was asking me to help decorate their temple for Wesak. "I respect your wish," I said, somewhat irritably, "but is it really necessary for me to be at the temple so early?" Nhat Chi Mai looked directly at me and said, "If you don't want to come, its okay, but please don't speak so strongly about it!" When she left, I felt ashamed, and I resolved to go to the pagoda early on Tuesday, just to please her.

On Tuesday morning, Ngoe ran frantically into my family house and told me that Sister Mai had set herself on fire, right outside the Tu Nghiem Pagoda! I couldn't believe my ears! I sat perfectly still for a long while, and then I said, "Sister Mai has sacrificed herself for peace." My mother, sitting next to me., burst into tears. "Your friend's act," she said, "will lead her parents to the grave!" she looked at me with each word, preparing herself for the day I might do the same.

Without a word, Ngoe and I went out, knowing that much needed to be done. I went straight to Mai's parents' home, and when I entered the house, they embraced me, sobbing. As we sat together, her mother actually passed out several times. Then I drove them to the pagoda, and they went inside. I don't know why, but I was unable to enter the pagoda and see Mai in death. Instead I ran to the Cau Muoi Market and told our vendor friends of Mai's sacrifice. As I was sharing the news with dear old Aunt Ba, I started to cry and she began to weep with me. Soon everyone in the market was in tears. Aunt Ba walked over to the taxi and pedicab drivers, spoke a few words to each, and immediately the drivers began to carry all the vendors from the market to the pagoda to see Mai for the last time.

The well known write, Bac Thieu Son, also came to the pagoda, joined by several other intellectuals. His face was drawn, and when he saw me, he could only manage to say, "Phuong!" and tears rolled down his cheeks. The printer who refused to print our peace books was also there. He came up to me, sobbing, and said that in the future he would help us in any way we needed. Even government officials and military men came and offered to help our work for peace. It was only them that I realized that my works of advice to Mai against sacrificing ourselves ("We are too few. If we are gone, there will not be enough people to do the work") was wrong. Her sacrifice had indeed moved the hearts of many people and caused the peace movement to swell like waves in a storm. Even friends who had become guerrillas in the jungle sent back news and asked, "How can we help realize Mai's wish for peace and reconciliation?"

Before she died, Nhat Chi Mai placed two statues in front of her, the Virgin Mary and Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva. In her poems and letters she asked Catholics and

Buddhists to work together for peace so that people might realize the love of Jesus and the compassion of the Buddha.

I never say Thay Tri Quang more moved. At one o'clock in the morning, he sent a message to Tu Nghiem Pagoda to ask the nuns to provide a car for me to come to An Quang Pagoda. (He was afraid I would be arrested or kidnapped if I came by myself.) when I arrived at his pagoda, the gate was locked, and I had to climb over it. As I entered his room, he was trying to repair an old tape recorder, and he told me, "this machine hardly works, but I want to have a tape of someone reading the poems and letters of the young woman who sacrificed herself so I can come to know her better. Will you read them? You are also a young woman from the South, so your voice must be close to hers."

The next day, at four o'clock in the morning, Thay Tri Quang disguised himself as a novice and had someone take him to Tu Nghiem Pagoda. He had been under house arrest for some time, so he could not travel openly. In front of Mai's coffin, he chanted sutras for her. When he finished, he called me into a room of the pagoda and said, "You must find a way to print Mai's letters and distribute them widely. I will pay for the paper and the printing. Ask some of the Buddhist elders to lend you the money, and my younger sister will pay them back."

The following day, Thay Tri Quang called me again, "Mai's prayer was for all religions to work together for peace. I've heard that Father Nguyen Ngoc Lan is a progressive Catholic and close to us. Please ask him to write a preface to Mai's letters." I was very moved. In the past, Thay Tri Quang had been sceptical about working with Catholics. In fact, Father Lan had already offered to print Mai's letters and write a foreword to them. He even agreed to circulate them, a very dangerous thing to do. With each heartfelt act, I thought of Mai's smiling face, and I could hear her saying, "Isn't that wonderful?" Just as she had prayed, the elders of the Buddhist Church tried every day to find opportunities to work with the Catholics, and the Catholics also began to have more sympathy for the Buddhists. It all began with everyone's appreciation of Sister Mai.

During the three days her body lay in Tu Nghiem Pagoda, I tried to keep busy. I went to meet students both inside and outside our movement. I went to all the markets. I visited many organizations and friends. When I saw Hiep and other friends sitting by her body, weeping and clutching the yellow cloth that covered her, I didn't have the courage to come near. I could only think that my body should be there too, or in a pagoda in Hue, Ben Tre, or Can Tho. Hadn't that been Mai's wish? But I was alive, able to stand, walk, eat, drink, and sleep.

Say after day, I met with friends to inform them of Mai's sacrifice for peace. And night after night, I stayed up translating her poems into English and French for newspapers and peace groups around the world. But it was not until Ngo brought me Mai's final letters and poems that I understood how she had spent her last three weeks; she had stayed with her parents in order to give them those last precious hours of her life. She was "sweet bananas, fragrant rice, and precious honey," a loving child for them, all the while preparing for her sacrifice.

Students came to the pagoda to prevent the police from taking Mai's body away. The police, afraid that the news of her sacrifice would travel to other provinces and inspire

others to worked for peace, tried to persuade her parents to bury her right away. Mai's father resisted, but her wife's grief was so great that finally, on the third day, he agreed to bring Mai's body to An Duong Dia in Phu Lam for cremation.

On the day after Mai's sacrifice, many newspapers carried blank spaces where the news of her act had been censored. Word of her death travelled only by friends, but even so, on the day of the cremation, a huge crowd came to the ceremony. When the funeral car reached Phu Lam Bridge, the crowd behind it stretched more than five kilometers, all the way back to the Tu Nghiem Pagoda. Students and teachers, merchants and vendors, politicians and priests were all present. I was surprised to see so many wealthy men and women who, until then, had accused us of being under the control of the communists. There was a fine, cool rain. The white dresses of young women students, the black shirts of poor workers, the monk's and nun's robes, the simple rags of our street vendor friends from the markets, and the fine clothes of the well-to-do were all moistened by the gentle rain. My younger sister Thanh, with her gift for lightening eve the saddest moments, whispered in my ears, "Sister, do you see Mai? She is sitting on the funeral car looking back at us, her face bright, saying. "Oh, Phuong and Thanh, I feel very joyful. There really are a lot of people here, aren't there?" I had been walking in the rain, immersed in my sadness, when I heard Thanh imitate Mai's special accent, and I had to smile. She was right. It was exactly what Mai would have said. When you want something ordinary, you can just go out and buy it, but when you want something extraordinary, like love, understanding, and peace for a whole nation, you have to pay for it with something much more precious than money. My sister, Nhat Chi Mai, did not commit suicide. She loved life. She had a good education, and the conditions to live comfortably, even in the midst of the war. She sacrificed her life because, more than anything, she wanted the killing to stop. She tried to bring peace to Vietnam by paying for it with her life.

I remember Thay's poem, "Recommendation," that she read again and again just before she immolated herself:

*Promise me,
Promise me this day,
Promise me now,
While the sun is overhead
Exactly at the zenith,
Promise me:

Even as they
strike you down
with a mountain of hate and violence;
even as they step on you and crush
you
like a worm,*

*even as they dismember and
disembowel you,
remember, brother,
remember:
man is not our enemy.*

*The only act worthy of you is
compassion Invincible, limitless,
unconditional.
Hatred will never let you face
The beast in man.*

*across ten thousand worlds of birth
and dying.*

*One day, when you face this beast
alone,
with your courage intact, your eyes
kind,
untroubled,
(even as no one sees them),
out of your smile
will bloom a flower.
And those who love you
will behold you*

*Alone again,
I will go on with bent head,
knowing that love has become
eternal.
On the long, rough road,
The sun and the moon
Will continue to shine.*

After Nhat Chi Mai immolated herself for peace on May 16, 1967, I became ever more determined to find ways to end the suffering of Vietnam.

Resource Appendix II

The original Tiep Hien was an initiative to build coalition in struggle against oppression in a neo-colonial society (in 1964 to 74. So passionate was their engagement that most of them died in struggle. It succeeded in stirring the people of Vietnam and reverberated in US and the rest of the world. During this phase the war ended and the Marxists came to power. In 1974, the Tiep Hien movement dissolved itself.

In 1980's some people in USA and France, along with a few of the survivors of the earlier movement 're-planted' the Tiep Hien Sutras in the soil of their country. Quite soon they became a large institution, acquired lots of land and other resources which the 'original Tiep Hien' never had in Vietnam. But the quality of their praxis (could it remain the same? Some radical Buddhist commentators say that the Interbeing between striving for change in the inner and the outer dimensions (one main flag of the original Tiep Hien (was no more so visible in the new claimant to the tradition of Tiep Hien.

In the following section (A) we give a basic statement by Thich Nhat Hanh, delivered during the later phase. We give some comments within brackets to highlight its contrast with the original struggle. We follow it up in (B) with the comments of an enthusiastic convert to the new Tiep Hien order (but one who expresses many dilemmas as well.

(A)Diet for a Mindful Society (THICH NHAT HANH

P.223, ENGAGED BUDDHIST READER, Ten Years of Engaged Buddhist Publishing: Ed. Arnold Kotler Parallax Press, Berkeley, CA, USA;

[We give here the Five Precepts referred above, and commentary only for the first two, with our notes (given within bracket.]

The First Precept

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I vow to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking and in my way of life.

[The point in this precept that can lead to social protest action is – 'learn ways to protect the lives', and 'not to let others kill'. We ask, what ways to learn? And how 'not to let others kill'? By getting into social movements, building up awareness and social pressures, or, personal change, changing my lifestyle, shopping habits? We give the commentary to the First precept here]:

The foundation of all precepts is mindfulness. With mindfulness, we see that lives everywhere are being destroyed, and we vow to cultivate compassion as a source of energy for the protection of people, animals, plants, and our entire planet. Just feeling compassion is not enough, we also

have to develop understanding so we know what kind of action to take. We must make the effort to stop all wars.

The mind is the basis of our actions. To kill with the mind is more dangerous than to kill with the body. When you believe that you have the only way and that everyone who does not follow your way is your enemy, millions may be killed. So it is not just by killing with our hands that we break the first precept. If, in our thinking and our way of life, we allow killing to go on, this is also an offence. We must look deeply. When we buy something or consume something, we may be participating in an act of killing. This precept reflects our determination not to kill, either directly or indirectly, and also to prevent others from killing. Vowing to practice this precept, we commit ourselves to protecting our planet and becoming bodhisattvas energized to practice love and compassion.

[We see that 'social protest activism' is not mentioned. The only type of action mentioned here is to 'look deeply' when, 'we buy something or consume something', so that we can avoid 'participating in an act of killing'. This seems to be the only mode 'social activism' we find in the commentary that can reflect 'our determination not to kill, either directly or indirectly, and also to prevent others from killing.']

The Second Precept

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I vow to cultivate loving kindness and learn the ways of working for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I vow to practice generosity by sharing my time, energy and material resources with those who are in need. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. I will respect the property of others, but I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on Earth.

[Here again we enquire how much priority is given to the 'outer' change (social mobilizing and resistance) as contrasted with the 'inner' change (changing our minds and lifestyles) efforts.]

Stealing comes in many forms. Oppression is one form of stealing and it causes much suffering both here and in the Third World. Countries are torn by poverty and oppression. We want to help hungry children help themselves, for example, but we are caught in a way of life that keeps us so busy that we do not have time. We do not need a lot of money to help them. Sometimes they only need one pill or one bowl of food, but because we cannot free ourselves from our own small problems and our life styles, we don't do anything.

This precept is also about awareness of suffering and cultivating loving kindness. We may have the capacity to being generous, but we must also develop specific ways to express our generosity. Time is more than money. Time is for bringing joy and happiness to other people and thus to ourselves. There are three kinds of gifts the gift of material resources, the gift of helping people rely on themselves, and the gift of non-fear. Helping people not to be destroyed by fear is the greatest gift of all. This precept teaches us the very deep practice of sharing time, energy, and material resources with those who are in real need and truly reflects the bodhisattva ideal of compassion.

[Does it not lead more to the path of funding and giving time to NGOs doing social service work in 'third world' by the people of 'first world'? where we find here the call to 'combine inner and outer change', that had led to such daring and magnificent resistance movement in Vietnam in 64-74? It is not by chance that we never heard of this Tiep-Hien (reconstituted in the

US in 80's) doing anything much in all the 'Vietnams' US keeps creating – whether in Nicaragua or Iraq or Afghanistan.]

The Third Precept

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I vow to cultivate responsibility and learn ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without love and a long term commitment. To preserve the happiness of myself and others, I am determined to respect my commitments and the commitments of others. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct.

The Fourth Precept

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I vow to cultivate loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I vow to learn to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I will make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

The Fifth Precept

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I vow to cultivate good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I vow to ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in my body, in my consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society. I am determined not to use alcohol or any other intoxicant or to ingest foods or other items that contain toxins, such as certain TV programs, magazines, books, films, and conversations. I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness with these poisons is to betray my ancestors, my parents, my society, and future generations. I will work to transform violence, fear, anger, and confusion in myself and in society by practicing a diet for myself and for society. I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society.

Resource Appendix II

(B) The Five Precepts and Social Change – PATRICIA MARX ELLSBERG

P.240, ENGAGED BUDDHIST READER, *Ten Years of Engaged Buddhist Publishing*: Ed. Arnold Kotler Parallax Press, Berkeley, CA, USA;

AFTER ATTENDING two retreats with Thich Nhat Hanh, I had the feeling of being “in love” with Thay (Thich Nhat Hanh) and Sister Chan Khong and with a whole community and way of life. And when I vowed to follow the precepts, I felt as if I were making a commitment as serious and profound as taking marriage vows.

I have no doubt of the powerful and far-reaching effect the precepts can have on my life if I take them to heart. And yet, during the retreats I found a question persistently recurring as to the relevance of my own personal practice of the precepts to social change. In the face of massive violence and injustice in the world, what difference does it make if I follow the precepts, or even if all the thousands of people Thay has touched with his teachings live by them more fully? How would this bring about the radical transformations that are necessary?

I found myself uncomfortable with what I perceived to be an underlying premise of the retreat: that if enough individuals change, society will change. In my understanding, society is not simply an aggregate of individuals. It is also shaped by social structures and concentrations of power and wealth. There are vested interests that have disproportionate control and work to maintain and profit from inequality and militarism. These forces need to be challenged and transformed before there can be genuine peace or justice.

In a flash of recognition, I saw that many of the policies of my country and those of other nations are based on the flagrant disregard of the precepts. In fact, much of the evil in the world comes from the systematic – *and often societally sanctioned (violation of the precepts by governments, corporations, and other institutions. Let us measure our own society’s conduct by the precepts.*

The First Precept. Think of the Gulf Massacre in this context and the glorification of the slaughter of over quarter of a million people. Many of them civilians. We live in a war economy fuelled by a vast military-industrial complex and billions of dollars of arms sales. Our nuclear policy is based on the threat of mass murder, our foreign policy upon institutionalized violence. Our economy depends on the whole-sale destruction of nature.

The Second Precept. We as Americans comprise six percent of the world’s population and consume forty percent of the world’s resources. Many of these resources flow to us from countries ruled by dictatorships that our government has installed, supported, and controlled. In turn they set terms of trade favourable to us, while exploiting and terrorizing their own people, with our government’s covert support. This amounts to official theft, not “exchange”. Most of our military might is used to control what is not rightly ours.

The Third Precept. Think of the energy and resources our society devotes to stimulating sexual desire unconnected to commitment or love (through advertising, pornography, and popular culture in general.

The Fourth Precept. Governments and politicians lie. The secrecy system exists not so much to keep secrets from the enemy as to keep the truth from the public. Our government routinely resorts to force rather than peaceful means to deal with conflict, while claiming the opposite, as in Panama, Libya, Nicaragua, Grenada, and Iraq.

The Fifth Precept. We are constantly bombarded by advertising for alcohol, cigarettes, caffeine, pharmaceutical drugs. Even more pernicious, our government, through its covert intelligence apparatus, is secretly but deeply involved in abetting the operators of the drug trade, as became evident in the Iran-Contra scandal.

Suddenly during the retreat, I saw a way the precepts can be of utmost social relevance. We must hold them as a standard of behavior for nations, intuitions, and corporations as well as for individuals. It is essential that we end the double standard that exists between public and private morality. We must ask of our country what we ask of ourselves.

Those of us living in a democracy have a special obligation to do all we can to move our nation along with our own lives in the direction of following the precepts. We must act individually and together to prevent the government that represents us from supporting mass murder and terrorism, stealing, lying, supporting drug traffickers, and raping the Earth. In fact, our own survival, in the long run, depends on it.

Likewise, the more fully we follow the precepts, the more powerfully we can act for social change. Indeed, political work is an extension of personal life.

In the spirit of Thay's reformulation of the precepts in positive terms, imagine a world in which individuals and institutions alike act with compassion and loving kindness, where governments as well as the citizens they serve are mindful, cultivate a healthy environment, and truly protect the lives of people, animals and plants. Imagine a time when the resources of the Earth are redirected away from killing towards the enrichment of life.

What if our President's policies conformed to Buddhist principles, Americans pledged allegiance to the Five Precepts as well as the flag, and we celebrated Interdependence Day along with the Fourth of July? Such thoughts inspire in me a Buddha smile.

Resource Appendix (III)

Eco-systemic or interbeing way of looking at everything:

1. Self And Compassion In Engaged Buddhist Philosophy

– *The Greening Of The Self* – Joana Macy

2. A Historical Overview

– *THE WEB OF LIFE* – Fritjof Capra

1. *The Greening Of The Self* – Joana Macy

P.171, ENGAGED BUDDHIST READER, *Ten Years of Engaged Buddhist Publishing*: Ed. Arnold Kotler Parallax Press, Berkeley, CA, USA;

SOMETHING IMPORTANT is happening in our world that you are not going to read about in the newspapers. I consider it the most fascinating and hopeful development of our time, and it is one of the reasons I am so glad to be alive today. It has to do with what is occurring to the notion of the self.

The self is the metaphoric construct of identity and agency, the hypothetical piece of turf on which we construct our strategies for survival, the notion around which we focus our instincts for self-preservation, our needs for self-approval, and the boundaries of our self-interest. Something is happening to the self!

The conventional notion of the self with which we have been raised and to which we have been conditioned by mainstream culture is being undermined. What Alan Watts called "the skin-encapsulated ego" and Gregory Bateson referred to as "the epistemological error of Occidental civilization" is being unhinged, peeled off. It is being replaced by wider constructs of identity and self-interest (by what you might call the ecological self or the eco-self, co-extensive with other beings and the life of our planet. it is what I will call "the greening of the self".

(After a recent lecture, mentioning the 'chipko' tree hugging movement and Greenpeace campaign to save whales) I received a letter from a student I'll call Michael. He wrote:

I think of the tree-huggers hugging my trunk, blocking the chain saws with their bodies. I feel their fingers digging into my bark to stop the steel and let me breathe. I hear the bodhisattvas in their rubber

boats as they put themselves between the harpoons and me, so I can escape to the depths of the sea. I give thanks for your life and mine, and for life itself. I give thanks for realizing that I too have the powers of the tree-huggers and the bodhisattvas.

What is striking about Michael's words is the shift in identification. Michael is able to extend his sense of self to encompass the self of the tree and of the whale. Tree and whale are no longer removed, separate, disposable objects pertaining to a world "out there"; they are intrinsic to his own vitality. Through the power of his caring, his experience of self is expanded far beyond that skin-encapsulated ego. I quote Michael's words not because they express a desire and a capacity that is being released from the prison cells of old constructs of self. This desire and capacity is arising in more and more people today as, out of deep concern for what is happening to our world, they begin to speak and act on its behalf.

One day ...I asked him (John Seed, director of the rainforest Information Centre in Australia), "You talk about the struggle against the lumbering interests and politicians to save the remaining rainforests in Australia. How do you deal with this despair?"

He replied, "I try to remember that it's not me, John Seed, trying to protect the rainforest. Rather I'm a part of the rainforest protecting myself. I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into human thinking." This is what I mean by the greening of the self. It involves a combining of the mystical with the practical and the pragmatic, transcending separateness, alienation, and fragmentation. It is a shift that Seed himself calls "a spiritual change," generating a sense of profound interconnectedness with all life.

This is hardly new to our species. In the past poets and mystics have been speaking and writing about these ideas, but not people on the barricades agitating for social change. Now the sense of an encompassing self, that deep identity with the wider reaches of life, is a motivation for action. It is a source of courage that helps us stand up to the powers that are still, through force of inertia, working for the destruction of our world. I am convinced that this expanded sense of self is the only basis for adequate and effective action.

When you look at what is happening to our world (and it is hard to look at what's happening to our water, our air, our trees, our fellow species (it becomes clear that unless you have some roots in a spiritual practice that holds life sacred and encourages joyful communion with all your fellow beings, facing the enormous challenges ahead becomes nearly impossible.

Robert Bellah's book *Habits of the Heart* is not as place where you are going to read about the greening of the self. But it is where you will read why there has to be a greening of the self, because it describes the cramp that our society has gotten itself into with its rampant, indeed pathological, individualism. Bellah points out that the individualism that sprang from the Romantic movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (the seeds of which were planted even earlier than that) is accelerating and causing great suffering, alienation and fragmentation in our century. Bellah calls for a moral ecology which he defines as a moral connectedness or interdependence. He says, "We have to treat others as part of who we are, rather than as a 'them' with whom we are in constant competition."

To Robert Bellah, I respond, "It is happening in the arising of the ecological self. And it is happening because of three converging developments. First, the conventional small self, or ego-self is being impinged

upon by the psychological and spiritual effects we are suffering from facing the dangers of mass annihilation. The second thing working to dismantle the ego-self is a way of seeing that has arisen out of science itself. It is called the systems view, cybernetics, or new paradigm science. From this perspective, life is seen as dynamically composed of self-organizing systems, patterns that are sustained in and by their relationships. The third force is the resurgence in our time of non-dualistic spiritualities. Here I am speaking from my own experience with Buddhism, but it is happening in other faith-systems and religions, such as “creation spirituality” in Christianity. These developments are impinging on the self in ways that are undermining it, or helping it to break out of its boundaries and old definitions. Instead of ego-self, we witness the emergence of an eco-self!

The move to a wider ecological sense of self is in large part a function of the dangers that are threatening to overwhelm us. Given nuclear proliferation and the progressive destruction of our biosphere, polls show that people today are aware that the world, as they know it, may come to an end. I am convinced that this loss of certainty that there will be a future is the pivotal psychological reality of our time. The fact that it is not talked about very much makes it all the more pivotal, because nothing is more preoccupying or energy-draining than that which we repress.

Why do I claim that this erodes the old sense of self? Because once we stop our own responses to the pain of our world (whether it is the burning of the Amazon rainforest, the famines in Africa, or the homelessness in our own cities (the grief or anger or fear we experience cannot be reduced to concerns for our own individual skin. It can never be the same.

When we mourn over the destruction of our biosphere, it is categorically distinct from mourning over our own death. We suffer with our world (that is the literal meaning of compassion. It isn't some private craziness. Yet, when I was weeping over the napalming of villages in Vietnam twenty years ago, I was told that I was suffering from a hangover of Puritanical guilt. When I expressed myself against President Reagan, they said I had unresolved problems regarding my own father. How often have you had your concerns for political and ecological realities subjected to reductionist pop-therapy? How often have you heard, “what are you running away from in your life that you are letting yourself get so concerned about those homeless people? Perhaps you have some unresolved issues? Maybe you're sexually unfulfilled?” it can go on and on. But increasingly it is being recognized that a compassionate response is neither craziness nor a dodge. It is that opposite; it is a signal of our own evolution, a measure of our humanity. We are capable of suffering with our world, and that is the true meaning of compassion. It enables us to recognize our interconnectedness with all beings. Don't ever apologize for the tree burning in the Amazon or over the waters polluted from the mines in the Rockies. Don't apologize for the sorrow, grief, and rage you feel. It is a measure of your humanity and your maturity. It is a measure of your open heart, and as your heart breaks open there will be room for the world to heal. That is what is happening as we see people honestly confronting the sorrows of our time. And it is an adaptive response.

The crisis that threatens our planet, whether seen from its military, ecological, or social aspect, derives from a dysfunctional and pathological notion of the self. It derives from a mistake about our place in the order of things. It is a delusion that the self is so separate and fragile that we must delineate and defend its boundaries, that it is so small and so needy that we must endlessly acquire and endlessly consume, and that it is so aloof that as individuals, corporations, nation-states, or species, we can be immune to what we do to other beings.

This view of human nature is not new, of course. Many have felt the imperative to extend self-interest to embrace the whole. What is notable in our situation is that this extension of identity can come not through an effort to be noble or good or altruistic, but simply to be present and own our pain. And that is why this shift in the sense of self is credible to people. As the poet Theodore Roethke said, “I believe my pain.”

...

surfacing

Contemporary science, and systems science in particular, goes farther in challenging old assumptions about a distinct, separate, continuous self, by showing that there is no logical or scientific basis for construing one part of the experienced world as “me” and the rest as “other.” That is so because as open, self-organizing systems, our very breathing, acting and thinking arise in interaction with the shared world through the currents of matter, energy, and information that move through us and sustain us. In the web of relationships that sustains these activities there is no clear line demarcating a separate, continuous self.

As post-modern systems theorists say, “there is no categorical ‘I’ set over against a categorical ‘you’ or ‘it’.” One of the clearer expositions of this is found in the teachings and writings of Gregory Bateson, whom I earlier quoted as saying that the abstraction of a separate “I” is the epistemological fallacy of Western civilization. He says that the process that decides and acts cannot be neatly identified with the isolated subjectivity of the individual or located within the confines of the skin. He contends that “the total self-corrective unit that processes information is a system whose boundaries do not at all coincide with the boundaries either of the body or what is popularly called the ‘self’ or ‘consciousness’.” He goes on to say, “The self is ordinarily understood as only a small part of a much larger trials-and-error system which does the thinking, acting, and deciding.” ...

In another illustration, a blind person with a cane is walking along the sidewalk. Tap, taps, whoops, there’s a curb. What is doing the walking? Where is the self of the blind person? What is doing the perceiving and deciding? That self-corrective feedback circuit is the arm, the hand, the cane, the curb, the ear. At that moment that is the self that is walking. Bateson’s point is that the self is a false reification of an improperly delimited part of a much larger field of interlocking processes. And he goes on to maintain that:

This false reification of self is basic to the planetary ecological crisis in which we find ourselves. We have imagined that we are a unit of survival and we have to see to our own survival, and we imagine that the unit of survival is the separate individual or a separate species, whereas in reality through the history of evolution, it is the individual plus the environment, the species plus the environment, for they are essentially symbiotic.

The self is a metaphor. We can decide to limit it to our skin, our person, our family, our organization, or our species. We can select its boundaries in objective reality. As the systems theorists see it, our consciousness illuminates a small arc in the wider currents and loops of knowing that interconnect us. It is just as plausible to conceive of mind as coexistent with these larger circuits, the entire “pattern that connects,” as Bateson said.

Do not think that to broaden the construct of self this way involves an eclipse of one’s distinctiveness. Do not think that you will lose your identity like a drop in the ocean merging into the oneness of Brahman. From the systems perspective this interaction, creating larger wholes and patterns, allows for and even requires diversity. You become more yourself. Integration and differentiation go hand in hand.

The third factor that is aiding in the dismantling of the ego-self and the creation of eco-self is the resurgence of non-dualistic spiritualities. Buddhism is distinctive in the clarity and sophistication with which it deals with the constructs and the dynamics of self. In much the same way as the system theory does, Buddhism undermines the categorical distinctions between self and other and belies the existence of a continuous, self-existent entity. It then goes further than any systems theory in showing the pathogenic character of any reifications of the self. It goes further still in offering methods for transcending these difficulties and healing this suffering. What the Buddha woke up to under the Bodhi tree was the *paticca samuppada*, the co-arising of phenomena, in which you cannot isolate a separate continuous self.

We think, “What do we do with the self, this clamorous ‘I’, always wanting attention, always wanting its goodies? Do we crucify it, sacrifice it, mortify it, punish it, or do we make it noble?” upon waking we realize, “Oh, it just isn’t there.” It’s a convention, just a convenient convention. When you take it too seriously, when

you suppose that it is something enduring which you have to defend and promote, it becomes the foundation of delusion, the motive behind our attachments and our aversions.

For a beautiful illustration of a deviation-amplifying feedback loop, consider Yama holding the wheel of life. There are the domains, the various realms of beings, and at the centre of that wheel of suffering are three figures; the snake, the rooster and the pig (delusion, greed and aversion (and they just chase each other around and around. The linchpin is the notion of our self, the notion that we have to protect that self or punish it or do something with it.

Oh, the sweetness of being able to realize: I am my experience. I am this breathing. I am this moment, and it is changing, continually arising in the fountain of life. We do not need to be doomed to the perpetual rat-race. The vicious circle can be broken by the wisdom, prajna that arises when we see that the 'self' is just an idea; by the practice of meditation, dhyana; and by the practice of morality, shila, where attention to our experience and to our actions reveals that they do not need to be in bondage to a separate self.

Far from the nihilism and escapism that is often imputed to the Buddhist path, this liberation, this awakening puts one into the world with a livelier, more caring sense of social engagement. The sense of interconnectedness that can arise, is imagined (one of the most beautiful images coming out of the Mahayana (as the jeweled net of Indra. It is a vision of reality structured very much like the holographic view of the universe, so that each being is at each node of the net, each jewel reflects all the others, reflecting back and catching the reflection, just as systems theory sees that the part contains the whole.

The awakening to our true self is the awakening to that entirety, breaking out of the prison-self of separate ego. The one who perceives this is the bodhisattva (and we are all bodhisattvas because we are all capable of experiencing that (it is our true nature. We are profoundly interconnected and therefore we are all able to recognize and act upon our deep, intricate, and intimate inter-existence with each other and all beings. That true nature of ours is already present in our pain for the world.

When we turn our eyes away from that homeless figure, are we indifferent or is the pain of seeing him or her too great? Do not be easily duped about the apparent indifference of those around you.

What looks like apathy is really the fear of suffering. But the bodhisattva knows that to experience the pain of all beings is necessary to experience their joy. It says in The Lotus Sutra that the bodhisattva hears the music of the spheres, and understands the language of the birds, while hearing the cries of the deepest levels of hell.

One of the things I like best about the green self, the ecological self that is arising in our time, is that it is making moral exhortation irrelevant. Sermonizing is both boring and ineffective. This is pointed out by Arne Naess, the Norwegian philosopher who coined the phrase "deep ecology". This great systems of view of the world helps us recognize our embeddedness in nature, overcomes our alienation from the rest of creation, and change the way we can experience our self through an ever-widening process of identification.

Naess calls this self-realization, a progression "where the self to be realized expands further and further beyond the separate ego and includes more and more of the phenomenal world." And he says,

In this process, notions such as altruism and moral duty are left behind. It is tacitly based on the Latin term "ego" which has as its opposite the "alter". Altruism implies that the ego sacrifices its interests in favour of the other, the alter. The motivation is primarily that of duty. It is said we sought to love others as strongly as we love our self. There are, however, very limited numbers among humanity capable of loving from mere duty or from moral exhortation.

Unfortunately, the extensive moralizing within the ecological movement has given the public the false impression that they are being asked to make a sacrifice (to allow more responsibility, more concern and a nicer moral standard. But all of that would flow naturally and easily if the self were widened and depend so that the protection of nature was felt and perceived as protection of our very selves.

Please note this important point: virtue is not required for the greening of the self or the emergence of the ecological self. The shift in identification at this point in our history is required precisely because moral exhortation doesn't work, and because sermons seldom hinder us from following our self-interest as we conceive it.

The obvious choice, then, is to extend our notion of self-interest. For example, it would not occur to me to plead with you, "Oh, don't saw off your leg. That would be an act of violence." It wouldn't occur to me because your leg is part of your body. Well, so are the trees in the Amazon rain basin. They are our external lungs. And we are beginning to realize that the world is our body.

This ecological self, like any notion of selfhood, is a metaphoric construct and a dynamic one. It involves choice; choice can be made to identify at different moments, with different dimensions or aspects of our systemically interrelated existence (be they hunted whales or homeless humans or the planet itself. In doing this the extended self brings into play wider resources (courage, endurance, ingenuity (like a nerve cell in a neural net opening to the charge of the other neurons.

There is the sense of being acted through and sustained by those very beings on whose behalf one acts. This is very close to the religious concept of grace. In systems language we can talk about it as a synergy. But with this extension, this greening of the self, we can find a sense of buoyancy and resilience that comes from letting flow through us strengths and resources that come to us with continuous surprise and sense of blessing.

We know that we are not limited by the accident of our birth or the timing of it, and we recognize the truth that we have always been around. We can reinhabit time and own our story as a species. We were present back there in the fireball and the rains that streamed down on this still molten planet, and in the primordial seas. We remember that in our mother's womb, where we wear vestigial gills and tails and fins for hands. We remember that. That information is in us and there is a deep, deep kinship in us, beneath the outer layers of our neocortex or what we learned in school. There is a deep wisdom, a bondedness with our creation, and an ingenuity far beyond what we think we have. And when we expand our notions of what we are to include in this story, we will have a wonderful time and we will survive.

THE WEB OF LIFE (Fritjof Capra)

From, ONLY CONNECT – Soil, Soul, Society

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(Extracts)

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY of Western science and philosophy, there has been a fundamental tension between two very different approaches to understanding nature. The Greek philosophers called these two approaches the study of substances and the study of form. By substance, they meant what today we would call matter, structure, or quantity; and by form, they meant what we now call pattern, order, or quality.

The substance approach asks, “What is it made of? What are the fundamental constituents?” the form approach asks, “What is its pattern?” these are two very different lines of investigation that have been in competition with one another throughout our scientific and philosophical tradition.

The study of substance began in Greek antiquity, in the sixth century B.C., when philosophers asked, “What are the ultimate constituents of matter?” The answers to this question define the various schools of the early era of Greek philosophy.

Among them was the idea of four fundamental elements: earth, air fire and water. In modern times, those were recast into the chemical elements, many more than four, but still the ultimate elements out of which all matter was thought to be made. Then the elements were identified with atoms and, with the rise of atomic and nuclear physics in the twentieth century, the atoms were further reduced to subatomic particles.

Similarly, in biology the basic elements developed elaborate classification schemes for plants and animals. Then, with the discovery of cells as the common elements in all organisms, the focus shifted from organisms to cells. Finally the cell was broken down into its macromolecules – the enzymes, proteins, amino acids, and so on. Molecular biology became the new frontier of research. In all those endeavours, the basic question had not changed since Greek antiquity: “What is reality made of?”

At the same time, throughout history, the study of pattern was always present. It began with Pythagoras (Geometry) and was continued by the alchemists, the Romantic Movement, and various other traditions. However, for most of the time the study of pattern was eclipsed by the study of substance until it re-emerged forcefully in our century, when it was recognized by systems thinkers as essential to the understanding of life.

SYSTEMS THINKING emerged during the 1920s simultaneously in three different fields: organismic biology, gestalt psychology, and ecology. In all these fields scientists explored living systems, i.e. integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller parts. Living systems include individual organisms, parts of organisms, and communities of organisms, such as social systems and ecosystems. Living systems span a very broad range and systems thinking is therefore by its very nature an interdisciplinary, or “transdisciplinary” approach.

From the beginning of biology, philosophers and scientists had realized that the form of a living organism is more than shape, more than a static configuration of components in a whole. The first system thinkers expressed this realization in the famous phrase, “The whole is more than the sum of its parts.”

For several decades, biologists and psychologists struggle with the question: in what sense exactly is the whole more than the sum of its parts? At that time, there was a fierce debate between two schools of thought, known as mechanism and vitalism. The mechanists said: “The whole is nothing but the sum of its parts. All biological phenomena can be explained in terms of the laws of physics

and chemistry.” The vitalists disagreed and maintained that a non-physical *entity (a vital force or field) must be added to the laws of physics and chemistry to explain biological phenomena.*

The school of organismic biology emerged as a third way out of this debate. Organismic biologists opposed both mechanists and vitalists. They agreed that something must be added to the laws of physics and chemistry to understanding life, but that something, in their view, was not a new entity. It was the knowledge of the living system’s “organizing relations”.

According to the systems view, which was formulated first by the organismic biologists, the essential properties of a living system are properties of the whole, which none of the parts has. They arise from the interactions and relationships between the parts. These properties are destroyed when the system is dissected, either physically or theoretically, into isolated elements. Although we can discern individual parts in any system, these parts are not isolated, and the nature of the whole is always different from the mere sum of its parts. It took many years to formulate this insight clearly, and several key concepts of systems thinking were developed during that period.

The science of ecology, which began during the 1920s, enriched the systemic way of thinking by introducing a new concept, the network. Ecological communities were seen as organisms linked together through feeding relations. At first, ecologists formulated the concepts of food chains and food cycles, and these were soon expanded to the concept of the food web.

The “Web of Life” is, of course, an ancient idea, which has been used by poets, philosophers and mystics throughout the ages to convey their sense of the interwovenness and interdependence of all phenomena. As the network concept became more and more prominent at all systems levels, viewing organisms as networks of organs and cells, just as ecosystems are understood as networks of individual organism. This led to the key insight that the network is a pattern that is common to all life. Wherever we see life, we see networks.

SYSTEMS THINKING IMPLIES a shift of perspective from the parts to the whole. This shift requires another shift: from objects to relationships.

Understanding relationships is not easy, because it goes counter to the traditional scientific enterprise in Western culture. In science, we have been told, things need to be measured and weighed. But relationships cannot be measured and weighed; relationships need to be mapped. So here is another shift: from measuring to mapping.

When you map relationships, you will find certain configurations that occur repeatedly. This is what we call a pattern. Patterns are configurations of relationships that appear again and again. The study of relationships, then, leads to the study of patterns. Systems thinking involves another shift of perspective from content to patterns.

Moreover, mapping relationships and studying patterns is not a quantitative but a qualitative approach. Indeed, in the new mathematics of complexity qualitative analyses” is now used as a technical term. So systems thinking implies a shift from quantity to quality.

Finally, the study of relationships concerns not only the relationships among the system’s components, but also those between the system as a whole and surrounding larger

systems. Those relationships between the whole and its environment are what we mean by context. The word "context", from the Latin contexere ("to weave together", also implies the idea of the web and is perhaps the most appropriate to characterize systems thinking as a whole. Systems thinking is "contextual thinking".

THE 1940s SAW THE formulation of actual systems theories. This means that systems concepts were integrated into coherent theoretical frameworks describing the principles of organization of living systems. These "classical systems theories" include general systems theory and cybernetics. ...

General systems theory was formulated in the 1940s by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, an Australian biologist who set out to replace the mechanistic foundations of science with a holistic vision. Like other organismic biologists, Bertalanffy believed that biological phenomena required a new way of thinking. ...

Bertalanffy's greatest contribution was the concept of an "open system" as a key distinction between biological and physical phenomena. Living systems, he recognized, are open systems, which means that they need to feed on a continual flux of matter and energy from their environment to stay alive.

These open systems maintain themselves in a balanced state far from equilibrium, characterized by continual flow and change. Bertalanffy coined the German term (denoting) "flowing balance" to describe such a state of dynamic balance. He recognized that such open systems cannot be described by classical thermodynamics, which was the theory of complex systems available at his time, and he postulated that a new thermodynamics of open systems was needed to describe living systems.

Bertalanffy's concepts of an open system and of a general systems theory established systems thinking as a major scientific movement. In addition, his emphasis on flow and flowing balance introduced process thinking as an important aspect of systemic thought. ...

Cybernetics was formulated by an inter-disciplinary group of scientists, including the mathematicians, Norbert Wiener and John von Neumann; the neuroscientist, Warren McCulloch; and the social scientists, Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead.

Cybernetics soon became a powerful intellectual movement, which developed independently of organismic biology and general systems theory. The central focus of the cyberneticists was the attention to patterns of organization. In particular, they were concerned with patterns of communication, especially in closed loops and networks. Their investigations led them to the concepts of feedback and self-regulation, and then, later of, to self-organization.

The concept of feedback, one of the greatest achievements of cybernetics, is intimately connected with the network pattern. In a network, you have cycles and closed loops; and these loops can become feedback loops. A feedback loop is a circular arrangement of causally connected elements, in which an initial cause propagates around the links of the loop, so that each element has an effect of the next, until the last "feeds back" the effect into the first element of the cycle.

The cyberneticists distinguished between two kinds of feedback, self-balancing (or "negative") and self-reinforcing (or "positive"). Examples of the latter are the commonly

known runaway effects, or vicious circles, in which the initial effect continues to be amplified as it travels repeatedly around the loop.

Because you have feedback in networks, you can have self-regulation; and ultimately self-organization. A community, for instance, can regulate itself. It can learn from its mistakes, because the mistakes will travel and come back along these feedback loops. Because of feedback, a community has its own intelligence, its own learning capability.

So, networks, feedback and self-organization are closely linked concepts. Living systems are networks capable of self-organization.

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