

August 2006

Dear friends of the Alliance,

Deepak Chopra

Today we join hands, Resurgence Magazine, Inter Press Service and the Alliance for a New Humanity (ANH), to launch a newsletter that will communicate a new message. The New Humanity News is an effort to inform you of positive transformation forces already present in the world; an effort to demonstrate the emergence and converging of a critical mass of people who share a vision of the world based on peace, compassion, social justice, sustainability, and the awareness of our common being and destiny.

Our aim is to connect caring communities, groups, and individuals ("Change Agents") at a global level, to promote the understanding of humanity's underlying unity and to advance its expression.

Just imagine - humanity at peace, actively-compassionate, every person wholly nourished, Mother Earth and her atmosphere nurtured. The Alliance, now being summoned and communicated through this newsletter, will be an expression of a new global dialogue.

We want to link at a global level all efforts for change by bringing together people, organizations and individuals alike, who are increasingly transforming the world for the better.

I believe this transformation is occurring through a change of heart, arising out of the recognition that there is only one humanity, one continuum of being. As this loving consciousness dawns within all, we find ourselves spontaneously moved into selfless action.

"New Humanity News" will share and celebrate stories of some of the many who are working around the world, in commerce or selfless service, to bring about sustainable change. Hopefully, these stories will inspire others around the world, so they, too, join in fanning the flames of change. Every issue will bring you IPS contextual news assessing the state of the world, articles from the Resurgence Network on sustainability, and stories from the Alliance for a New Humanity. Share it with your friends, share your stories with us, and stay connected.

Namaste,

Deepak

Health, South Africa: Youth helping youth

JOHANNESBURG, Jul 13 (IPS) - When it comes to fighting the spread of HIV among South Africa's young people, one of the best weapons appears to be the youth itself. Just ask Zamani Cele, one of 348 students who have been trained by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's AIDS programme during the past two years.

"I want to make a difference in the lives of young people," she told IPS from the coastal city of Durban. "We urge them to

get tested and seek treatment. The more people get tested and seek treatment, the more people will come out to disclose their status. This will be good for the society."

The peer educators, as these young campaigners are called, distribute leaflets written in English and Zulu, the languages commonly spoken in the eastern province of KwaZulu-Natal. They also give out condoms, and hold meetings to inform students how to protect themselves against the HI-virus - and to persuade them to get tested and seek treatment if necessary.

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Independent news on global issues

IPS welcomes you to this new communication tool of the Alliance for the New Humanity, of which we are founders, and together with other friends and institutions we believe it can give an important contribution for creating a different world for peace, solidarity and compassion.

Inter Press Service News Agency (IPS), the world's leading provider of information on global issues, is backed by a network of journalists in more than 140 countries. Its clients include more than 3,000 media organizations and tens of thousands of civil society groups, academics, and other users.

IPS's main object is to contribute to development by promoting free communication and a professional flow of information to reinforce technical and economic co-operation among developing countries. Its core activity is the IPS global news agency that produces independent news and analyses. IPS is the leading news agency that focuses on civil society and development issues and reports on the globalisation process as it unfolds and the people it excludes. IPS coverage is focused on developing regions of the world, but within the context of globalisation and its impacts.

The content of IPS World Service is written and edited from the perspective of the developing world. The overwhelming majority of the contributing journalists and editors are from developing countries, including those reporting from Europe, North America and Japan.

IPS reaches large audiences comprising media editors and NGOs worldwide as well as policy-makers at the United Nations, specialised UN agencies, International Institutions and European and North American development agencies. We hope that this newsletter satisfies your expectations.

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Banks adopt fortified green principles

WASHINGTON, Jul 6 (IPS) - Dozens of commercial banks and lenders, including global heavyweights like Citigroup, JP Morgan Chase and Standard Chartered, signed an updated set of environmental and social safeguards on Thursday that binds them to shoulder more responsible lending in the future.

Under the programme, more than 40 international financial institutions have committed to financing only those projects

that comply with the Equator Principles (EP), a set of voluntary environmental and social standards that seek to uphold the rights of people displaced by projects and to protect endangered ecosystems.

Signatories, including big-name banks such as ABN AMRO, HSBC, Barclays, Credit Lyonnais, Credit Suisse Group, Dresdner Bank and Royal Bank of Canada, sometimes co-finance projects with public multilateral lenders such as the World Bank in mining, oil, gas and related sectors, often associated with pollution and major population dislocations.

The move underlines the growing pressures on private banks and public lenders to invest in more environmentally and socially friendly projects.

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Soil, Soul, Society

THIS NEWSLETTER IS an example of collaboration in practice. There are many committed individuals and organisations working for a spiritually-fulfilling time now, an environmentally sustainable time in the future, and socially-just systems for all times. But, quite often, we feel isolated and unconnected. It is my hope that this newsletter will prove to be an effective tool for developing channels of communication amongst all who are dedicating our lives to create a better world.

Some of us work in the environmental field. We think that the Earth is in grave crisis. Tackling the problems of global warming, peak oil and a polluted atmosphere is so urgent that no effort should be spared in combating this crisis.

Then there are others who feel that the Earth crisis is really a crisis of the spirit, of the consciousness. Polluted mind manifests as polluted environment. Therefore, rather than treating the outer symptoms, we need to address the deeper causes of the crisis.

Still others are convinced that the immediate crisis facing humanity is made up of the problems of poverty, injustice, and economic deprivation. Ecology and spirituality are luxuries which we cannot afford whilst millions of humans are dying without food water or shelter. These three divergent points of view have their own logic; but even though they appear to be divergent, are they really divergent? Might they not be convergent problems needing holistic solutions?

As during the French Revolution, the trinity of Equality, Liberty and Fraternity crystallised the aims of that revolution, at this time we now need a similar trinity - one which could sum up the vision of a new humanity. That trinity, I suggest, may be called Soil, Soul, and Society.

We need to replenish the soil, as all life comes from the Earth and returns to the Earth. But replenishment of the soil cannot be a mechanistic or utilitarian act. It has to be rooted in soul qualities and spiritual values. These spiritual values cannot be abstract notions; they must manifest in the social sphere. In my view social justice is as much a spiritual and environmental imperative as it is a political challenge.

Most individuals and organisations working for a better world could relate to the notion of Soul, Soil and Society. This trinity could represent a holistic and inter-connected worldview. And I hope that through this Newsletter, we can report

the aspirations and activities of many around the world, and show the underlying unity of our work.

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Lady Buddha

How does a fishmonger's daughter from Bethnal Green in London's East End take on Tibetan Buddhist monastic robes then live for twelve years in solitary meditative retreat in a Himalayan cave 13,200 feet above sea level? The cave was buried under snow in winter, flooded with water during the spring thaw, and constantly endangered by avalanches and wild animals. Suddenly Venerable Tenzin Palmo's vow to "attain enlightenment in the female form, no matter how many lifetimes it takes" seems perfectly possible despite there having been no historical female heads of religions, and no recorded female Buddhas.

At eighteen years of age she felt an affinity with Buddhism, strong enough to declare to her mother, "I am a Buddhist!" Soon, Tenzin Palmo, or Diane Perry as she was known then, realised she would have to travel to India if she wanted to explore this further. For it was in India that Tibetan refugees had arrived in 1959 after Tibet was invaded by China. Tenzin Palmo arrived in India in 1964 and taught English at a school for young lamas for a short while before meeting her teacher, Khamtrul Rinpoche.

Living in his monastery as the sole nun among a hundred monks provided Tenzin Palmo with first-hand experience of the discrimination that restrained women's access to information that was imparted freely to men. Hungry for instruction, she felt frustrated by the fact that she was kept out of most monastic activities, and experienced misogynistic prejudices. This phase lasted for six years. Then she left the monastery upon her teacher's suggestion to go to Lahaul in the higher reaches of the Indian Himalayas, where she would eventually enter the cave and launch herself into uninterrupted, intense spiritual practice.

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All that is good

Picture a country in which women have no vote and in which few are employed outside the home. A country in which, through conviction or social pressure most people attend religious gatherings once a week, in which the state religion and the law ban homosexuality, where there are powerful religious movements urging abstinence from alcohol, where it is normal for women over thirty to wear black and where they only appear in public if their bodies are completely covered, in which married women have only recently acquired property rights, and there is a strong social stigma against divorce, illegitimacy, and any form of sexual activity outside marriage.

Saudi Arabia? Pakistan? Iran? No, this is a picture of Britain in 1900 (in modern Iran and Pakistan at least, many of the above are not true). A century ago many of the things we criticise today in other parts of the world, particularly concerning the treatment of women, held true in the UK. The changes that have taken place in Britain and other Western countries since then can be seen as a huge experiment in human personal freedom, the consequences of which are still being worked through.

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