

These are some chapters of Vishal new book. It is copyright material – not to be published!

Truth and Transformation

Vishal Mangalwadi LLD

© Vishal@VishalMangalwadi.com
1447 E. Elizabeth St
Pasadena, CA 91104
1-323-202-9306

© Vishal Mangalwadi

Other Books by Vishal Mangalwadi include

The World of Gurus

When the New Age Gets Old: Looking for a Greater Spirituality

Missionary Conspiracy: Letters to a Postmodern Hindu

India: The Grand Experiment

Dear Rajan: Letters to a New Believer

Spirituality of Hate

The Legacy of William Carey: A Model for Transforming a Culture (With Ruth Mangalwadi)

Burnt Alive (with Babu Verghese, Vijay Martis and others)

Table of Content

Preface
Foreword

Section I: Do We need Transformation?

1. **Morality:**
The Floundering Secret of the West's Success
2. **Rationality:**
The Forgotten Force behind Western Technology
3. **Family:**
The Failing School of Western Character
4. **Humanity:**
The Forsaken Soul of Western Civilization

Section II: Can Nations be Healed?

5. **His Wounds:**
For the Healing of the Nations
6. **His Compassion:**
Jesus the Trouble-maker
7. **His Kingdom:**
The Natural and the Supernatural
8. **His Truth:**
The Key to Transformation

Section III: Does the New Testament Transform?

9. **Evangelism:**
St Paul the Trouble-Maker
10. **Sin:**
The Law and Transformation
11. **Salvation:**
A New Man in Christ
12. **The Holy Spirit:**
Power for Transformation
13. **The Church:**
A Community for a new Kingdom
14. **Hope:**
He's Making All Things New

Section IV: How Can I Participate?

Appendix 1: TransformWorld Movement – Dr. Luis Bush
Appendix 2: A Worldview for World Healing – Dr. Robert Osburn

Appendix 3: Corruption Vs. True Spirituality

Section I

Do We Need Transformation?

Chapter 1

Morality: The Floundering Secret of the West's Success

A Secret of the West's Success

Six months after our marriage, Ruth and I left urban India to live with poor peasants in one of the most backward districts in central India. We lived on less than \$10 per month, trying to understand chronic poverty and developing practical projects to help our neighbors get out of its grip. As word of our work began to spread, I started getting invitations to speak in different countries. In 1980, I was invited to England to speak on simple lifestyle and economic development.

My plane took off from Delhi at about 2 in the morning. I was sleepy, but when Mr. Singh, who was sitting next to me found out that I was living in a mud house near an obscure village in an unheard-of district, he concluded that, more than sleep, I needed counseling. So he made it his mission to persuade me to change my vocation, relocate to England and become a businessman. He went on and on describing how easy it was to establish a successful business in England. By 3:30 in the morning it was getting difficult to pretend I was listening, but just when I was ready to tell him I needed to sleep, something intrigued me: while my English was poor, his was worse. I began to wonder how someone who couldn't speak English succeed as a businessman in England. So, I asked him, "Mr. Singh, why is it so easy to do business in England?" He replied without pausing, "Because, everyone trusts you over there."

I wasn't a businessman so I didn't understand what "trust" had to do with the economic success of an individual or a nation. Had he defended Capitalism or Socialism or

Communism, I might have become interested in listening, but his answer didn't square with any of the Pundits: neither with the Left nor with the Right. So I pushed my seat back and fell asleep.

A few months later Ruth and I were in Holland to speak in the annual conference of one of their largest charities. One afternoon, our host, drs. Jan van Barneveld, said to me "Come, let's go get some milk." The two of us walked to a dairy farm through the beautiful Dutch countryside with gorgeous moss-covered trees. I had never seen such a dairy! It had a hundred cows, there was no staff on site but the dairy seemed amazingly clean and orderly. Back in India, we had a small dairy of our own. Our dairy had two workers but it was filthy and stank.

The contrast captured my attention because in the region where I served, at least 75% of the women spent an hour or two every day collecting cow-dung with their bare hands. They carried it on their heads to their backyards and turned it into cow-dung cakes for cooking fuel. Poorer families cooked the food in the same room where they slept. The poisonous fumes burned their lungs that by the time they are fifty they look like ninety-year old European women.

The Dutch dairy surprised me because there was no one there to milk the cows. I had never heard of machines milking cows and pumping the milk into a huge tank. We walked into the milk room but there was no one there to sell the milk. I expected Jan to ring a bell but he just opened the tap, put his jug under it and filled it. Then he reached out to a windowsill, took down a bowl full of cash, took out his wallet, put 20 Guilders into the bowl, took some change, put it in his pocket, put the bowl back, picked up his jug and started walking. I was stunned.

"Man", I said to him, "If you were an Indian you would take the milk and the money." Jan laughed.

A few years ago I told this story in Indonesia and an Egyptian gentleman laughed the loudest. As all eyes turned to him, he explained, "We are more clever than Indians. We would take the milk, the money and the cows".

Back in Holland, in that moment of laughter I understood what Mr. Singh had been trying to explain to me on the plane to London. If we walked away with the milk and the money the dairy owner would have to hire a sales girl. Who will pay for her? Me – the consumer!

However, if the consumers are dishonest, why should the supplier be honest? He will add water to the milk to increase the volume. Being an activist I will protest that the milk is adulterated; the government must appoint Milk Inspectors. But who will pay for the inspectors? Me – the taxpayer!

If the consumer and the suppliers are dishonest, why would the inspectors be honest? They will extract bribes from the suppliers. If they don't get the bribes, they will use one law or another to make sure that the sale is delayed enough to make our non-refrigerated milk curdle. Who will pay for the bribes? Initially the supplier: but eventually the consumer.

By the time I have paid for the milk, the sales girl, the water, the inspector, and the bribe, I don't have enough money to buy chocolate syrup to add to the milk. So my children don't like milk. Consequently, they are not as strong and robust as the Dutch children.

Having paid for all of these things, the chances are that I won't have surplus money to take my children for an ice-cream treat on Saturday night. The person who makes and sells ice cream adds value to the milk, while the sales girl, the water, the inspectors and the bribe add nothing. In paying for them I simply pay for my sin – my propensity to covet and steal my neighbor's milk and money. The high price of sin makes it difficult for me to buy ice cream. That is to say, my sin prevents me from patronizing genuine economic activity. My culture of distrust and dishonesty robs me of money that could be used to provide a better life for my children and productive employment for my neighbors.

The visit to this dairy farm helped me understand what my fellow passenger – a semi-literate businessman – was explaining to me. He could say what economic experts avoid discussing: that moral integrity is a huge factor behind the unique socio-economic-

political success of the west. Where did this morality come from? Why isn't my society equally trustworthy?

Education was a key force that transformed Western Europe. Religious reformers such as Martin Luther and John Amos Comenius universalized education precisely to civilize generations that could create a new Europe. They made character-formation a primary function of education because they accepted the Jewish ideas that God was holy; God had given us moral laws such as the Ten Commandments and obedience to His Word was the pre-condition of Shalom, the source of good life, disobeying God's moral law was sin that did not go unpunished. Yet, sinners could repent, receive forgiveness and new life. This good news became the intellectual foundation of the modern West, the force that produced moral integrity, economic prosperity and political freedom. ¹

Why are Moral Foundations Floundering?

If moral integrity is foundational to prosperity, why don't secular experts talk about it? The reason is that the universities no longer know whether moral laws are true universal principles or mere social conventions made up to restrict our freedoms.

And why don't they know?

Economists have lost the secret of the West's success because philosophers have lost the very idea of truth.

Why?

The truth was lost because of an intellectual arrogance that rejected divine revelation and tried to discover truth by the human mind alone. Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711 – 1776) demonstrated that unaided logic and experience could not prove God, human self or some of the basic assumptions of science – such as that every effect has to have a cause or that the laws of physics have to be the same everywhere and at every time in the universe.

¹ Early 18th century England was as corrupt as my country, it was transformed by a religious revival led by John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church. For that story see chapter 7 of my book *Missionary Conspiracy: Letters to a Postmodern Hindu*.

Hume's recognition of the limits of logic should have humbled the Enlightenment's arrogance. However, instead of admitting that our logic had its limits, many assumed that if logic could not prove God then God could not exist. Hume tried to build a case for morality without God but German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) recognized that without divine revelation the human mind was incapable of knowing if the universe was moral. In this life we see the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper but without revelation we cannot know if there will be a final judgment after death.

Kant tried to save morality but Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), the 19th century German philosopher, concluded that if logic could not know morality, it had to be a mere social construct. Since Judeo-Christian morality favors the weak, it must have been made up by the slaves to restrain the freedom of the powerful – the Aryans.

Existentialist philosophers that followed Nietzsche decided that since the universe had no God-given meaning and moral norms, the quest for freedom required us to create our own values and purpose. For example, the German Existentialist Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) began his intellectual career as a champion of the Nazi thought.

Nazism was defeated militarily but logic's inability to know God or morality produced postmodern universities that no longer know if anything is right or wrong. Having rejected God and His revelation, educational institutions have become incapable of teaching goodness, beauty and truth. I encountered this aspect of the West two years after that trip to the dairy farm.

Corruption in the West

In 1985, Ruth and I were back in Holland – this time with our two daughters. One day when Ruth was lecturing somewhere, I took the girls on a sightseeing tour of Amsterdam. I tried to use a machine to buy a day pass for buses and trams. Since the instructions were in Dutch I asked two young women, "How do I get tickets from this machine?" They turned out to be Americans.

"Why do you want to get tickets?" they responded, "We've been riding around for a week. No one has ever come to check any tickets."

Their shamelessness shocked me more than their immorality. They represented the new generation – liberated from “arbitrary and oppressive” religious ideas of right and wrong. University education had freed them from commandments such as “You shall not steal.”

“It is wonderful,” I said to them, “that there are enough commuters who pay so that the system can carry some who don’t. Once your schools succeed in producing enough clever commuters, your country will catch up with mine. You will have to have ticket inspectors in every bus and have super-inspectors to spy on the inspectors. Everyone will then have to pay more. But corruption won’t remain confined to the consumers; it is a cancer that will infect politicians, bureaucrats, managers, operators, and the maintenance staff. They will take kickbacks, commissions and bribes to use substandard parts and services. Soon your public transport will resemble ours: frequent breakdowns will slow down not only the transport system but also your roads, efficiency and economy.”

Corruption and Poverty

Every year in August, Transparency International (TI) – a non-governmental agency in Germany – publishes what it calls Corruption Perception Index. It lists countries from the least corrupt to the most corrupt. No country is totally free from corruption. But some countries are so corrupt that TI is not able to survey them. These countries are ruled by mafias, gangs and warlords. Their chronic poverty proves what Adam Smith, a father of Capitalism, knew: the kind of real-world economics you have is the result of the kind of morality you have, which in turn is a result of the kind of philosophy you have. For example, why have health care costs become so obscene in America that they are destroying the very culture of compassion? Insurance and pharmaceutical companies that sustain health care are blamed because the intellectual elite no longer have a framework with which to estimate the economic costs of academic godlessness that separates economics from moral truth.

Transparency International is a secular agency. It knows that corruption is costly. Its official website tells stories such as these:

Around the globe, corruption impacts people's lives in a multitude of ways. In the worst cases, corruption costs lives. In countless other cases, it costs their freedom, health, or money. Here are a few examples: In May 2000, 950 people were injured and 22 killed, when a fireworks factory in Enschede, the Netherlands, burst into flames. The explosion reached such catastrophic levels because government regulators turned a blind eye to grave security breaches with regard to storing explosives on the factory premises. In return for remaining silent, the officials are said to have received free fireworks for years. Even an illegal enlargement of the factory was legalized by the authorities *a posteriori*. The local government official in charge of monitoring fireworks factories in the area admitted to not knowing the specific regulations on the storage of explosives. Though considered an expert, he hadn't read the relevant literature, nor had he taken part in any training seminars. He only followed the instructions of his superiors, one of whom was arrested on corruption charges two years ago.”²

The Source of Moral Transformation

What created the trustworthy England that Mr. Singh saw? Modern England's moral transformation began with John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Wesley would have agreed with TI that sin is a serious matter. Its initial economic costs are trivial compared to its ultimate cost – death. John Wesley learned from the Bible that sin does not lead to physical death alone. Its ultimate result is spiritual death or separation from God. Initially the separation is temporal and reversible, but if we choose not to repent and get right with God, we risk eternal separation from Him. Wesley taught English masses that the God who loves us takes sin so seriously that He incarnated to take our sin and its consequence – death – upon Himself. He died on the cross of Calvary so that we might find forgiveness and eternal life. This was the good news – the Gospel – according to the Bible and John Wesley. It created the culture of trustworthiness that facilitated Europe's economic progress.

Why didn't the Dutch steal the milk and money? Why were they able to give money for India's development?

² http://www.transparency.org/news_room/faq/corruption_faq#faqcorr7

Following the sixteenth century Reformation the Heidelberg Catechism played a huge role in shaping the Dutch religious culture. The Catechism was drafted in Germany in 1563 and translated into Dutch in 1566. The Catechism was approved by the Synods of Wesel (1568), Embden (1571), Dort (1578), the Hague (1586), and finally by the great Synod of Dort (1618-1619), which officially adopted it as the second of the Three Forms of Unity and made its weekly exposition by the ministers obligatory. As a result, Dutch Churches began to teach it every Sunday. The Catechism expounds the command "You shall not steal" in two questions:

Question 110: *What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?*

Answer: God forbids not only those thefts and robberies that are punishable by the courts; but he includes under the name of "stealing" all deceitful tricks and devices, whereby we design to appropriate to ourselves anything belonging to our neighbor – whether it be by force or under the appearance of right, as by unjust weights, inaccurate measurements, false reckoning of time spent in service, fraudulent merchandise, false coins, exorbitant interest, or by any other means forbidden by God. God is forbidding covetousness as well as all abuse as waste of a person's gifts.

Question 111: *But what does God require in this commandment?*

Answer: That I seek the advantage of my neighbor rather than my own every instance I can and deal with my neighbor as I desire to be dealt with by others. Further, that I faithfully labor and generously give, so that I may be able to care for the hurting and relieve the needy.

Why was the Catechism reading all these extra things into a simple commandment against stealing? The Catechism was not injecting anything into the Ten Commandments which the Bible did not. It was God who said that his people who did not tithe were robbing him. (Malachi 3:8). Holland had money to give because generation after generation was taught to work hard and give their tithes and offerings to God. The Dutch made money to give to the poor in India because the Bible taught, "He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need"

(Ephesians 4:28). In terms of GDP, China is the 4th largest economy, India is 12th and Saudi Arabia with much smaller population is 25th. But these are not “Donor Nations.”³

Economists know that corruption causes poverty, but they lack intellectual framework and spiritual resources to help corrupt countries ask tough cultural questions: why were the Dutch or the English able to trust each other in a way that the Indians or the Egyptians could not? What made some cultures more honest, less corrupt, more trustworthy, and therefore, more prosperous?

Corruption and Philosophy

³ *Top ten richest countries in the world in terms of GDP per capita:*

1. Luxembourg 80,800
2. Qatar 75,900
3. Bermuda 69,900
4. Norway 55,600
5. Kuwait 55,300
6. United Arab Emirates 55,200
7. Singapore 48,900
8. USA 46,000
9. Ireland 45,600
10. Equatorial Guinea 44,100

Top Ten Donor Countries of Foreign Aid in Billions \$ (in 2003-04)

1. USA 12.9
2. Japan 9.2
3. Germany 5.4
4. France 5.2
5. United Kingdom 4.8
6. Netherlands 3.4
7. Italy 2.3
8. Canada 2.0
9. Sweden 1.8
10. Norway 1.8
- 11.

For me the ironic fact was that while my culture teaches that each one of us is God, Holland and England were built on the Jewish idea that human beings are sinners and accountable to God. India's religious philosophy taught us that since the human soul was divine, the soul could not sin. In fact, our most rigorous religious philosophy taught us that everything is God;⁴ God is the only reality that exists; therefore there is no ultimate distinction between good and evil, right and wrong. Swami Shivananda of the Divine Life Society summarized classic Hinduism in this way:

The world is neither good nor bad. The mind creates good and evil. Thinking makes it so. The evil is not in the world, it is in the mind. . . If you become perfect [God] the world will appear good [perfect].⁵

Acharya-turned-Bhagvan-turned Osho Rajneesh who gave widespread publicity to the tantric idea of salvation through sex, summarized our Indian as well as postmodern Western worldview in similar terms:

We have divided the world into the good and the evil. The world is not so divided. The good and the evil are our valuations [not God's commandments] . . . There is no good, there is no bad. These are two aspects of one reality.⁶

The data collected by Transparency International (TI) shows that the least corrupt countries are overwhelmingly those whose soul was nurtured by the Bible (not the 'Church'). However, many intellectuals have been forced to conclude that if God has not given any moral commandments to human beings and if He will not judge us then morality is an artificial cultural construct; there are no moral norms that are binding on everyone; morality is flexible or relative. Different norms apply to different individuals or communities.

Moral Relativism and Poverty

These experts plan "economic development" but they do not understand the first lesson Ruth and I learned when we began living with the poor. Remember: we were living on a farm outside a village. No one did that. It was an invitation to robbers called 'dacoits.' It

⁴ This philosophy is called "Pantheism" (Pan = all; theos = God. i.e. all is God) or Monism (all is one).

⁵ Swami Sivananda, *Bliss Divine*, (Sivanandnagar, Divine Life Society, 1974) p.459.

⁶ Rajneesh, *Beyond and Beyond*, (Bombay, Jeevan Jagruti Kendra, 1970) pp 12-13.

took us no time to learn that one factor behind our people's poverty was that they were not able to make use of the land they had. If you don't live on your land, you can't protect vegetables, fruit or livestock. You don't grow them or keep chicken or rabbits because they will be stolen. A mango from India sells for as much as \$3 in America. Growing mangoes or guavas alone could lift whole families out of poverty. But if hardworking peasants grew good mangoes and guavas, the higher castes would come and take them. If they tried to protect their fruit they would be beaten and their wives raped.

Why?

Because there is no God who has said "You shall not covet your neighbor's [mangos]." Or "You shall not steal or commit adultery."

Is it really wrong to covet, steal or rape?

Postmodern Relativism, like my traditional culture says "Yes, it is wrong for *you* to do so, but it is not wrong for *us*, because *we* make the rules and have the power to enforce them. Morality is merely a function of cultural power. Moral rules are relative. You have no power to enforce *your* rules on us therefore they do not apply to us." This Nietzschean, Nazi, Aryan "truth" is now being propagated by many universities.

Our "Upper Castes" did not practice moral relativism (different moral norms for different castes) because they are more wicked than other human beings. They did so because our pantheism dismissed morality and our polytheism worshipped corrupt gods. Now corruption rules our public life because the West's intellectual and cultural elite also teach us moral relativism. The West is becoming corrupt like us because it is developing a 'new spirituality' without morality. This new spirituality is no different than our old spirituality.

The Dutch dairy gave me a glimpse into the moral soul of the West. But it did not explain why their dairies were cleaned mechanically while our women had to carry cow-dung on their heads.

Chapter 2

Rationality: The Forgotten Force behind Western Technology

Why Do They Haul Water on Their Heads?

Several years after my visits to England and Holland I was invited to teach a course on community development in a university in Uganda in Africa. I had assumed that Uganda was poor because it was a resource-deprived desert. En route from Entebbe airport to Jinja I saw hundreds of women and children carrying water on their heads. The sight made me feel at home because that is what women did in our villages and towns. It reinforced my assumptions about Africa's poverty, even though all I could see was lush greenery. The next day my assumptions collapsed into confusion.

I discovered that I was staying on the banks of Lake Victoria – one of the largest bodies of fresh water in the world. The mighty river Nile originated just a few miles from my guest-room. It starts with such force that in 1954 the British began generating hydro-electricity. Uganda produces more power than it consumes. Some of it is sold to Kenya. The question was: with so much water and so much power, why were human beings carrying water on their heads?

The image of women carrying pots of water on their heads powerfully symbolized the contrast between Western civilization and my culture. Why are women in my country forced to carry water, cow-dung or bricks on their head when women in the West are not? I asked this question to some Western visitors who came to India as spiritual seekers.

What Made the West a Thinking Civilization?

Some of these visitors came to me because they had heard of my book *The World of Gurus* which had been published by Asia's largest publisher. They wanted to talk about

Yoga, Tantra, meditation, reincarnation or vegetarianism. They were surprised that I wanted to learn from them how to deliver my neighbors from the degrading toil that stunted their minds and destroyed their bodies.

These Western pilgrims in India had taken the technological and economic progress of their societies for granted. Some were critical of it. They mentioned books such as *The Tao of Physics* by Fritjof Capra and *Aquarian Conspiracy* by Marilyn Ferguson. These books condemned the Bible for inflicting science and technology upon the world. This confused me because until then I had generally heard the accusation that Christianity was opposed to science and technology.

Western critics of technological progress saw women hauling water on their heads as something romantic. For me, that sight was not cute; it was a challenge. I needed no research to know that this method of carrying water meant limited water in homes. People could not wash their hands, dishes, fruit and salad adequately. Waterborne diseases would give them stomach diseases that sap energy and require avoidable treatment. I wanted to know: why do some cultures do with their minds what the rest of us do with our muscles?

When you use the mind, water brings itself to you: Water produces electricity and electricity pumps water into your home. A handful of workers using the mind can pump more water into every home and factory than millions of women carrying it morning and evening, 365 days a year. Why do we waste billions of man-hours hauling water or collecting cow dung, when women could be reading or teaching or planting or playing?

Could it be that the West uses the mind because the white race is more intelligent? I already knew that people living on the banks of the Nile were not dumb. They built pyramids thousands of years before the West learned how to make palaces. The problem is that the cultures that made pyramids and Taj Mahals did not make wheelbarrows for their slaves. Why?

The answer came from historian Lynn White Junior's study *Medieval Religion and Technology*. His pioneering research into the history of technology led him to conclude

that it was the Bible that made the medieval West the first civilization in history that did not rest on the backs of sweating slaves.

The first chapter of the Bible presented a God who was a worker, not a meditator. God worked for six days, so must we! To work is godly. The third chapter of the Bible taught that toil came as a curse upon Adam's sin. Humans became the only species that had to eat of the sweat of their brow. Since toil is a result of sin, salvation includes deliverance from sin as well as toil – from mindless, repetitive labor that requires no choice.

Western women do not haul water or dung on their heads because, while the elite in other cultures used technology for power and pleasure, prestige and torture, Christian monasteries began developing technologies that liberated powerless individuals from dehumanizing slavery. Toil is dehumanizing because it forces a human being to do what can be done by an ox, horse, wind, water or wheels.

Why Christian Monks Developed Technology

Having studied Hinduism I already knew that Hindu and Buddhist monks were no less intelligent than Christian monks. The philosophies they constructed, the caves that they sculpted and the temples that they built testify that they were second to none in imagination, ingenuity, architecture, engineering, discipline and organization.

Christian monks shared a common problem with the Buddhist monks: neither of them had wives to haul their water, grind their wheat or find fuel for cooking their bread. One difference was that the Buddha required his monks to beg for food while the New Testament said that whoever does not work should not eat. Christian monks invented machines because they had to bring their own water, clean their own dairies, grind their own wheat and bake their own bread. Christian monasteries developed technologies because their religious requirement to work was coupled with:

- (i) A spiritual quest for salvation from sin and its consequences, including toil.
- (ii) A theological commitment to the dignity of every human being – male or female, high or low, and
- (iii) A religious obligation to cultivate the human mind.

As religious institutions, Christian monasteries were unique; some of them evolved into universities because they were created to cultivate the mind as much as character. They made a distinction between myth and truth. They believed that the human mind could know the truth. Therefore, they required monks to study logic, philosophy, rhetoric, languages, literature, law, mathematics, music, agriculture, and metallurgy, in addition to the Bible. These religious institutions became the nursery of rational disciplines such as medicine and music, law and technology, astronomy and botany, capitalism and morality.

European monasteries cultivated the mind because they were founded upon St. Augustine's exposition of the Bible which taught that the human mind was different from the animal brain. It was made in God's image. They did not think that the mind was a product of blind chance or Primeval Ignorance (*Avidhya*). They believed that the human mind can know God, goodness and beauty; human words can communicate truth because God made our minds in His image. God gave us the gift of language so that He might communicate with us, His children.

These schools of piety created a uniquely *rational* religious man who became capable of developing complex theories that created capitalistic economy and institutions that produced civil societies where power was subject to agreed upon principles.

Why Buddhist Monks Did Not Develop Technology

Given our early start, India and China should have been eons ahead of the West in developing technology and economy. Why did we fall behind? The answer is that our cultures were shaped by worldviews that taught us that intellect was our problem and salvation depended on deliverance from the intellect, not sin.

In 1974, I spent some time in Rishikesh at the ashram of the late Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of Transcendental Meditation (TM). The Beatles helped him build this beautiful ashram on the banks of the river Ganges where it comes down to the plains from the Himalayas. I was interested in Mahesh Yogi partly because he is a graduate of Allahabad University, my *alma mater*. I had read several of his books, including his commentary on the *Bhagvad Gita* – a sacred Hindu scripture. The President of the Indian branch of his movement initiated me into TM in Maharishi's own living room.

He gave me a mantra: the name of a minor Hindu demigod. He asked me to recite this sound silently for twenty minutes, twice a day. In advanced stages, he said, I would need to fast and recite that mantra for several hours at a time.

I asked the initiator what my mantra meant. He told me not to bother with meaning. The principle of Transcendental Meditation was not to know truth, but to empty one's mind of all rational thought – to “transcend” thinking. To think was to remain in ignorance, in bondage to rational thought. Meditation, he explained, was a means of escaping thinking by focusing attention on a sacred though meaningless, sound like “OM.” His explanation helped me understand why our monks did not develop technology, university, and science.

Did the Printing Press Make the West a Rational Civilization?

At the turn of the millennium, secular scholars were telling us that the printing press made the West a rational civilization because it made books available easily and cheaply. The problem is that the same scholars were also telling us that China had invented printing five hundred years before Guttenberg and that Koreans had invented moveable metal fonts centuries before the West did but that did not turn these nations into rational societies, capable of making wheelbarrows.

By A.D. 823, Chinese monasteries had so many books that they had invented rotating bookcases. By 836, at least one monastery at Suchow in eastern China even designed a brake to stop the rotation. What did these books do?

In the middle of the 12th century, when Christian monasteries in Oxford and Cambridge were growing into universities, a Buddhist monk, Yeh Meng-te (d. 1148) traveled through many temples and monasteries in China and reported that “. . . in six or seven out of ten temples, one can hear the sound of the wheels of the revolving cases turning” day and night.

Were the monks turning the bookcases in order to find and read books? Had that been the case their scholarship would have been far ahead of Oxford and Cambridge. Many of these temples belonged primarily to the Ch'an sect, which minimized the importance of the written word. Professor Lynn White Jr. explains that the sound of the rotating

bookcases was “not a result of scholarly activity.” The monks were using the sound of the rotating wheels of these bookcases as a mantra. A word (*logos*) is a sound with sense. A mantra is a sound separated from sense. The monks sought “salvation by rotation of sacred writings.” They considered the rational act of reading and thinking about the meaning of the texts or words a hindrance to mystical enlightenment. That is, their idea of meditation was the opposite of the Western or the Biblical idea: they believed that salvation requires that we empty our minds of all thoughts and words.

My meditation on the banks of the river Ganges helped me understand why our monks did not harness her energy to liberate our women from their dehumanizing drudgery and toil. Our monks were not using their minds to replace muscles. They were trying hard not to think – and they succeeded.

Why is the West Replacing Reason with Mysticism?

We have already noted that once European philosophers separated reason from Revelation, their confidence in our mind’s ability to know the truth began to decline. Finally, philosophy’s failure to answer life’s fundamental questions forced thinkers to ask even more probing questions: What is language? What is logic? Why do we assume that logic can lead us to truth; or that truth can be communicated in words?

During the second half of the 20th century, Western philosophers such as Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) began deconstructing the foundational assumptions of the West. Universities found that having given up revelation they had no reason to trust Reason. They assumed that since there is no Creator, the *Mind* could not be anything but an accidental by-product of blind chance. It must have evolved merely to aid our fierce struggle for survival. Therefore, the *mind* had to be an instrument of manipulating the environment; it could not possibly be a means of knowing truth.

How then can we know the truth?

Once it was assumed that the mind could not know the truth many gave up the quest for truth while others started searching for truth with the help of drugs, meditation, yogic or sexual techniques of altering rational consciousness.

In California, I have met university graduates, even doctoral candidates, who spend 10 days at a time practicing *Vipaasana*. During this time they read nothing, ask no philosophical questions, and listen to no discourses. They sit and sit and sit, observing their breathing – inhaling and exhaling. Their breathing becomes the mantra like the sound of rotating bookcases. These educated Americans follow Indian and Chinese monks into seeking enlightenment by emptying their minds. This is the opposite of what Jesus said to his audience that were like sheep without a shepherd, harassed and helpless, weary and oppress: “If you abide in my word . . . you will *know the truth*, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32 ESV). Since this book asserts that it is *truth* that transforms, we will revisit this issue in later chapters.

For now the question is f the DNA of Western character, rationality, technology and universities developed in monasteries, then why were these monasteries rejected? And how did these ideas spread beyond monasteries to emancipate ordinary housewives from their drudgery and toil?

Chapter 3

Family: The Failing School of Western Character

Some people think that it was the power to vote that empowered Western women; others give credit to education or job opportunities. As early as the 1870s (that is 50 years before American women started voting) Indian reformers such as Keshab Chandra Sen had realized that the social institution that liberated Western women was *monogamy*: marriage being a permanent and exclusive union of one man and one woman. This definition of marriage gave Western women unique power over their husbands and children. Physically, intellectually, socially and morally strong women nurtured strong children, strong men, strong communities and nations.

Because of this realization Sen asked British Colonial rulers to make monogamy the law for all Indians. But Polygamy and polyandry were such integral parts of our religious culture that monogamy could not be made a law for Hindus for more than 80 years, until 1956. However, even in the late 1990s we had a Member of Parliament who had 39 wives and he did not know all their names. Polygamy devalued our women and weakened our children.

Few sociologists will dispute the fact that the West became stronger than other civilizations because something liberated and empowered Western women. This was an important conclusion reached by the celebrated French Magistrate Alexis de Tocqueville who visited America in 1831-32 and wrote a classic account *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville concluded that America was becoming stronger than Europe mainly because the American women had become stronger than European women:

If anyone asks me what I think [is] the chief cause of the extraordinary prosperity and growing power of this nation, I should answer that it is due to the superiority of their women [and family life].

And again:

Certainly of all countries in the world America is the one in which the marriage tie is most respected and where the highest and truest conception of conjugal happiness has been conceived.⁷

Indeed, until recently, America was the only country in the world where a Presidential candidate would have to withdraw if he was found involved in an extra-marital affair.

The question is: Why did the West define marriage as a permanent *and* exclusive union of one man and one woman? And why did family replace monastery as the school of character?

Sex and Social Reform

One man who transformed the Western view of marriage and took the seeds of Western civilization from monasteries into the wider culture was the sixteenth century German reformer Martin Luther. He was an Augustinian monk who denounced monasteries and promoted marriage and family as the divinely ordained school of character.

Luther knew first hand that despite their success in developing rationality monasteries and nunneries were not cultivating the character that they were meant to create. In 1522, Luther was hiding in the Castle of Wartburg, studying the Bible and translating the New Testament into German. A fresh reading of the Bible taught him that the monastic movement was built on a wrong belief: that holiness required perpetual virginity and that sex and marriage were “carnal.” In fact, the Bible’s teaching is that God created male and female to love one another, to become one flesh and have children. God instituted marriage before sin entered the world. Sex was a part of God’s

⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (p. 603 and 291, HarperPerennial 1988)

good and perfect creation. The Creator commanded Adam and Eve to have children, to fill the earth and to establish their culture over nature (Genesis 1:27-28).

Luther's writings began to change his society. At the risk of their lives, nuns escaped nunneries to get married. Katie was one of ten nuns who hid in empty beer barrels to flee their nunnery. Nine of them found husbands but she didn't. So she decided that she would marry Dr. Luther.

His senior colleagues advised Luther to live by his beliefs and marry her. He agreed to marriage to please his father and despise the devil. Predictably, his marriage became a weapon in the hands of his opponents. They used it to hit at the entire movement for reform. The Reformation they said was nothing but rationalization of Luther's sinful desire to give up his quest for personal holiness and to fulfill his carnal lust for sex.

Luther responded that the monks who condemned him for giving up pursuit of holiness had no idea what they were talking about: 'One year of marriage was more sanctifying than ten years in a monastery.' Marriage brings out the worst in us. But it also refines us, provided we *stay* in that school, seek grace to change, honor, love and serve our spouses whose views, values and habits irritate us.

The statement ascribed to Luther may be apocryphal, but he did propagate the radically new idea that *marriage*, not monastery was the school of character. Sex, not celibacy, builds a strong culture. However, Luther knew that not every form of marriage empowers women. When harnessed properly, sexual drive builds individuals, families and communities but it destroys when unleashed without the restraints of morality and wisdom.

In advocating marriage, Luther was promoting the morally-demanding idea of an exclusive and life-long love relationship between one man and one woman. It implied that sex inside of loving marriage was sacred and honorable but sex outside of marriage was sin. This idea spread around the world from Luther's home in Wittenberg. His home was the first Christian vicarage in Europe. Before him European priests did not marry.

Luther's house used to be a monastery. Monks left it because of his teachings. So Fredrick the Wise gave it to Luther as his home. Katie turned it into a guesthouse. She invited university students to live with them as paying guests. Some of these students started recording their after-dinner discussions with Dr. Luther. These *Table Talks* shaped the Western definition of marriage for five hundred years, until the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s. Luther's biblical idea of marriage so empowered the West that monogamy began to spread around the world.

Although my culture accepted polygamy, in practice most men had only one wife. Nevertheless, one result of polygamy was that our traditional culture did not and could not require men to love their wives. To hold your wife's hand and to walk beside her is still a revolutionary idea for a majority of Indians. Wives have to walk behind their husbands. Yet our people did not consider it morally wrong for a man to love a mistress instead. In fact, our temples offered to our leaders the services of religious prostitutes (called *Devadasis*) for companionship, pleasure and enlightenment. One of our most popular gods had 16,000 wives but none of his wives is worshipped, his consort is. Because polygamy makes marriage a non-exclusive relationship, our people have no moral problem voting for a mistress to become the chief minister of a state even if her political opponent is the wife of the deceased politician.

In cultures that permit polygamy, monogamy may be a social fact but it is not a moral restraint to an exclusive sexual relationship with one person only. The Beatles turned against their guru Mahesh Yogi, calling his celibacy a "lie" (John Lennon) because they did not understand that in Hinduism "celibacy" does not mean absolute abstinence from sex, it means abstinence from marriage and harnessing of sexual energy for becoming god – Brahma. The Hindu word for celibacy is *Brahmacharya* which involves an effort to become divine (Brahma). Brahma – a deity – himself has a consort – Saraswati.

What difference does it make whether one reserves their sexual energy for a single spouse or spends it in many affairs? Some Indian reformers advocated monogamy because they understood that permissive sex is like a river that flows in an unregulated manner. Its waters make little direct contribution to culture. The more water the greater will be the river's capacity for destruction. A river becomes useful for irrigation, water

mills or electricity when it is dammed and controlled, when its flow is limited and regulated. The greater the control, the greater its usefulness.

So, why don't American women haul water and cow-dung on their heads? Our women do so because they cannot say to their husbands, "You bring water today because you are sitting and playing cards. I want to put my feet up and read *Good Cowkeeping*." Polygamy and temple prostitution made our women so weak that they could not challenge their husbands to stop playing cards, or smoking pot in order to organize community and get the Village Council to vote for a 24-hour water supply.

The amazing irony is that some women reject monogamy because they think that to be tied exclusively to one person is slavery. That is ironic because the reality is that monogamy makes a husband a virtual slave to his wife. When told he has to stop playing cards and go and get water, the poor fellow cannot protest and take a second wife who would be less demanding. He cannot go to the temple and love a goddess or sleep in his mistress' home. He cannot divorce his bossy wife. In fact, he is not even allowed to hate her. He has to bring not just water but also a bouquet of flowers, preferably with a love note that says, "Honey! Why don't you rest for a change, I will make dinner tonight."

Does this make him weak or henpecked? It makes him meek as well as creative. He has to make not merely dinner but also a wheelbarrow to haul water or better still organize his community to get water pumped into his home, dairy or factory.

As a school that transforms character, monogamy is tough. That is why no culture in history ever made it mandatory. It is a peculiarly New Testament idea that is rooted in the Jewish Bible that God made only one Eve for Adam and for the two of them to be permanently one. Monogamy is tough because it cannot be sustained without a spirituality that mandates love above lust, submission as the secret of greatness, meekness as the source of glory and service as the path to power. The question is: are these biblical, western ideas of sex, love, marriage and family true? Do they matter? Or should the law in India, America, or Africa welcome multiple definitions of marriage and family as equally true, good and valuable? Obviously, these are not mere academic issues. If the west is still reaping the positive results of monogamy then many more countries in Africa are already paying massive socio-economic price for sexual

permissiveness of one or both the partners in terms of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, orphans and loss of their working generation.

The impact of unstable marriages has frightened millions of Europeans from having and nurturing children. This will enable Islam to take over Europe through reproduction alone, without firing a gun or winning a debate. Even before Islam takes over Europe, democracy and the Muslim vote are forcing Europe to legalize polygamy. It is legal in the Netherlands and is permitted for Muslims in Norway, Britain and Canada to have multiple wives.

The West was able to sustain monogamy only as long as it believed that love was a gift of grace, a fruit of the Spirit. Now people are taught that spirit does not exist, love is only chemistry. Once chemistry has changed you cannot love the same person. Chemistry is selfish and there is no spirit that can overrule chemistry in favor of self-sacrificing character. As a result of this thinking divorce has become commonplace. One does not need to ask for “divorce” three times, as in Islam. Once is enough. Easy divorce has already turned monogamy – the school of Western character – into serial polygamy.

The new West no longer looks at Martin Luther’s vicarage as the source of its definition of marriage. Many look to Hugh Hefner’s harem as offering a more interesting definition of sexuality. The tragedy is that Europe will soon graduate from Hefner’s harem to Mohammad’s harem, devaluing its women.

For Luther sex was for pleasure, procreation and bonding a family into permanent unity. The Sexual Revolution of the 1960s separated the pleasures of sex from the bonding role it plays in building stable and secure relationships. Separating the pleasures of sex from its role as bonding glue is turning men into boys – playboys, who take little or no responsibility for the women they love or for the children they produce. It is also turning West’s strong women into single mothers and ‘Desperate Housewives.’⁸

⁸ Between 1999 and 2004 the suicide rate in America has increased 19.4% among men and 31% among women ages 45-54.

The problem with polygamy, permissiveness and divorce is that these trends undermine the most potent idea behind Western civilization – the dignity of women, men and children. To that subject, therefore, we must now turn.

Chapter 4

Humanity: The Forsaken Soul of Western Civilization

My visit to Africa that is referred to in chapter two forced me to ask: Why is it that cultures that built pyramids and Taj Mahals could not make wheelbarrows for their women and children, slaves and laborers?

I discovered that it was a belief that enabled the West to abolish slavery and grant to their women greater liberty than even matriarchal cultures. That idea was that all human beings whether high or low, educated or illiterate, rich or poor, healthy or sick, male or female, or black or white were equal. And what made them the strong and the weak equal? It was not that every one evolved equally but the *fact* that every human being was made in God's image, and therefore was endowed with dignity.

This peculiar doctrine of the Dignity of Man was the force that made the West different from the rest of the world, but now it is no longer a part of Ivy League universities. At the dawn of the modern era Michelangelo painted it on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He depicted the idea as God creating Adam in His own image while Eve is in the other arm of God looking at the marvel that is Adam and awaiting her own creation which will be a marvel for Adam.

The contemporary West mocks Michelangelo's worldview and devalues human life to the level of mere animals. Let me illustrate the transforming power of this truth by sharing a true, though tragic, story. . .

When Ruth and I moved out of the city to serve poor peasants I was writing my first book *The World of Gurus*, which became a recommended reading in universities such as Cambridge. We had no tables or chairs. I sat on a stool and hand wrote the book on a small wooden plank that came out of the wall on one side of our bed. Ruth sat on the other side of the bed, editing my manuscript and typing it on a typewriter. When I didn't have enough work for Ruth, she would cycle to the village and go door to door to understand our neighbors. She wanted to know how many children were studying and what we could do to help those who were not going to school. Ruth ran into a 10 year-old girl and asked her "How many brothers and sisters do you have?"

"Three, maybe four," she replied

"Do you have three or do you have four?" Ruth sought clarification.

"Three," she said, "The fourth is almost dead."

'Can I come and see this child?' Ruth asked

She had to bend down and go through a little door into a mud hut without a window or lighting. In the middle of the room was a bare string cot and on this was an 18-month-old skeleton of a girl's body with pus oozing from sores all over including from her head. Flies covered her face because she couldn't raise her hand to chase them away.

She was so weak that she couldn't cry. When she tried to cry she only sighed. Her thighs were as thick as an adult's thumb. As Ruth looked at this dying child, Sheela, she started to cry.

"What's wrong with her?" Ruth asked the mother.

The mother smirked and said, "Oh, she doesn't eat anything. Whatever we give her she vomits."

"Have you taken her to the doctor?"

“What’s the use? What can the doctors do if she will not eat anything?”

“How do we know what doctors can and cannot do? Shouldn’t we give her the medical attention that is available?”

The mother got a little irritated. “How can we afford to go to the doctor?”

Ruth was sorry that they were too poor to go even to a free clinic in the city. So she said, “Really? I will give you the money to take this child to the hospital.”

The mother said, “I am afraid of the city – I can’t go there.”

“Well, take your husband.”

“How can he go? Who will look after the fields and the cattle?”

“What if I gave him the money to hire a laborer for a day to look after his field? Would he then come with you? I will come with you and help you navigate your way around.”

“Okay, I will speak to my husband.” With that the mother ended the conversation.

Ruth bicycled back to our house and got after me saying, “You have to go and talk to the husband.”

I wasn’t playing cards or watching TV, yet, I had to submit. I went even though the couple wasn’t expecting me. They had made up their minds that they were not going to the hospital.

Why?

“We don’t have the money.”

“But my wife told you that we will give you the money.”

“We don’t want to get into debt.”

“I will give it to you in writing that this is a gift, not a loan. We are never going to ask you for this money back.”

“Where will we get the time?”

“My wife told you that we will pay for a laborer so that you can create time and come.”

That really got them irritated. “Why are you bothered, since she is our daughter?”

I didn’t know how to answer that. *Why am I bothered?*

The only way I could interpret that question was that they wanted her to die. I didn’t believe that any parent could do that, but there was no other way to understand their behavior. So I decided to raise my voice, at least pretend to be angry.

“Are you killing this child? If you are killing her, why are you being so cruel? Why don’t you pick up a knife and stab her instead of letting her go through this pain and suffering?”

They were stunned, but I continued, “Look, if you don’t take this child to the hospital, tomorrow I am going to bring the police here and lodge a complaint that you are killing this child.”

By this time there was a crowd around me and I tried to put the pressure of public opinion upon them. I looked around for moral support but everybody looked at me as though I was a fool. It took me months to realize that I was, in fact, being utterly ignorant. They were doing what was customary in the village. They already had one girl, why did they need the second girl? The first one can cook and clean and look after the siblings. Why should they take on additional trouble to bring up another girl who will need a dowry to qualify for marriage?

One elderly gentleman told them, “Look, this fellow is crazy; he might actually bring the police. If the police took the daughter to the hospital, you would have to pay the bill. Since he is offering to pay, why don’t you go?”

So the next day Ruth took Sheela and her mother to a hospital that was not free, but it was of better quality. Sheela was so anemic that they couldn’t give her any medication or feed her fluid through her nose. She had to be put on intravenous. In a week she regained enough strength that they could start treating her and feeding her with a tube. After another week the doctor said, “The bill is getting too high. Why don’t you take Sheela to your home and feed her? I will come once a week to look at her.”

Sheela stayed in our home for a month. India did not have disposable diapers and we had no washing machine. Dirty diapers had to be washed by hand. It was a new experience . . . especially because Indian men did not *change*, let alone *wash*, their own children’s diapers. Once we made the decision to do whatever it took . . . we really fell in love with Sheela. She began to respond to that love. For the first time we could see her smiling. Her smile was worth all the trouble. Few experiences have been more satisfying, but a month or so later the mother came and started fighting:

“Everyone in the village is saying that our daughter is eating your food and this is polluting our caste. We will be excommunicated. We want our daughter back.”

Ruth said, “Of course, we have no intention of taking Sheela away from you. We want you to take your daughter and look after her. I will pay for the milk, but I will give it directly to the milkman to make sure that the milk comes. You take care of Sheela and we will come and visit her.”

Ruth started paying the milkman, but within a few weeks Sheela was back to square one. The milk was being given not to Sheela, but to her brothers. The whole process had to be repeated. Ruth had to fight with the mother, I had to fight with the father and then Ruth had to take them to the hospital. Sheela was again put on intravenous, fed by tubes and eventually brought to our home. The mother came back and fought again. We assumed that she had learned her lesson, so we gave her another lecture on parental

responsibility, gave her the baby and some clothes, hoping that this time things would be better. Within days, dear Sheela was dead.

I was convinced that her parents had killed her. Ruth didn't believe that any parent could possibly do that. After we had three more experiences of that kind Ruth began to realize that infanticide was a common practice in our area and therefore we should never take this risk. If parents do not want a child, we should take the baby and find a home for her (or him). So, we made that a practice: No questions, no arguments – if you don't want the child, we will find a home for her.

This is no place to go into those stories. The point is that what we experienced was a clash of two worldviews, both of which cannot be true. We saw this child very differently than the parents saw their own daughter. For us she was a precious individual. For them a second daughter was a liability. You feed her for 10-12 years, treat her, educate her, then you have to get into debt to get her married. That is not the end. The in-laws may torture her to extract a larger dowry from her parents. Her whole life is suffering. Why not end this suffering quickly and smoothly and save hassles to yourself and the child. What is the truth: was Sheela a liability or was she as valuable as her brothers . . . and any other person in the world?

If you were to argue with Sheela's parents they might respond: "Look, if we had facilities for ultrasound, if we knew that this was going to be a second daughter we would have aborted her. But, since we didn't know that she would be a girl – an unwanted baby – we made the hard decision to end her life after she was born, after we knew that she was a girl. We didn't do anything different than what you do when you know that you will not be able to give good life to your baby. You kill them, too. You just don't see what you are doing because you pay the doctors to dispose of your babies for you. You soothe your conscience by giving it a different name. The fact that we took 18 long months to make that painful decision only shows how difficult that decision was: how much we loved her."

"Why is it wrong to kill unwanted babies?" Her parents may go on to question you: "We believe that cows are sacred but you kill them. Your ancestors in Greece and Rome practiced infanticide as we do, but now you think that human life is sacred. Why should

we be bound by your values? After all, according to your universities, a cow is one kind of animal and a human being is simply another kind of animal. Whatever value a society ascribes to either cows or humans are arbitrary social conventions. If your universities are right, if there is no God who has said “You shall not kill” then why is murder wrong? Where does a person get a fundamental right to his or her life, property or conscience, if not from society? Why can’t a society take away the right to life that it gives? Or at least make exceptions to the normal rules?”

Sheela's parents had no philosophical basis for affirming the positive value of Sheela's life. In fact they did not know their own human dignity. They did not know that poverty and misery were not inevitable and inescapable. They were Hindus but like most Hindus they accepted the Buddha's first Noble Truth that life is suffering. They did not know that life does not need to be suffering. Suffering is not written in our stars, karma, fate or destiny.

Sheela's mother, grandmother and great grandmother may have all experienced life as miserable, but could Sheela's parents give to her a different and better future? Could a poor family bring up a daughter in a way that she could become a source of a better future for their whole family? Could a girl lift an entire village out of poverty? Sheela's parents were poor . . . but their poverty was more than material. They knew that we were willing to give a whole new life to Sheela, but they lacked faith. A second daughter was not valuable enough to resist the pressure of a culture that preferred that she die than eat our food.

Compare that with the story of Helen Keller. When she was 19 months old she became deaf and blind. Because she had not started speaking by then, she also became mute. Physically she was capable of speaking but psychologically she couldn't. She was shut up in her own self, unable to communicate with anyone in the world, frustrated, angry, irrational.

From the viewpoint of our age, Helen's life had no value. She was a girl – deaf, dumb and blind. Today in Holland she could be euthanized legally. Along with accepting Polygamy as legal, Holland has also become the first western country to make infanticide legal under certain circumstances. America will follow Holland, China and

India, as more and more people decide that a human being is nothing more than an animal. She has no intrinsic, God-given value. The only value she has is relative, arbitrarily assigned to her by other human beings.

Fortunately for Helen Keller, she was born in a different era, when the West still believed on the Bible's authority that a deaf, dumb, and blind girl is still a human being – the image bearer of God.

Ann Sullivan, Helen's nurse, teacher and maid, continued loving her and serving her. One day, she took Helen to a well because there was some fragrance of honeysuckle. Someone was drawing water. The nurse put Helen's hand under water and as Helen was shocked by that experience, Ann started spelling water – first slowly and then quickly. Helen was mesmerized. All of a sudden she understood that what was being drawn on one hand was the name of this cool something that was falling on her other hand. Her world changed – the magic of language began to make sense. She was excited. She came back home and started learning language. She was still mute but with this writing she learned words such as father, mother, teacher, brother, and sister on the very first day. In a few weeks Helen began to speak. Then she learned to type on a special Braille typewriter. She went on to become a mighty spokeswoman for handicapped children all over the world.

What made the difference for Helen? Was it her parent's wealth or their belief that a deaf, dumb and blind girl was valuable? There are aristocratic families in Western India that boast that they have not had a single girl born in their clan in fourteen generations! They won't tell you that their female babies are aborted. Earlier girls died mysteriously at birth. Helen was helped to overcome her tragedy because her culture believed that a deaf, dumb, blind girl was not a useless, worthless child without value. She was so important that God had Himself come to this earth to give her eternal life. Therefore, we must do all that we can to help her find abundant life.

The belief in the unique dignity of human beings was the force that created the Western civilization where citizens don't exist for the state. The state exists for individuals. Even kings, and presidents, prime ministers and army Generals cannot be allowed to trample upon an individual and his or her rights. The idea of human dignity liberated children

from the dark, satanic mills of the Industrial Revolution. It led to the American Revolution that ended colonialism and a Civil war that brought slavery to an end. It continues to inspire all sorts of movements for justice and equity.

The West was never perfect, but it was a mighty achievement to create a civilization where the king of England or the president of America had all the power to do right but no power to do wrong to take away the life of a deaf, dumb and a blind girl. The West valued human beings because the Bible said:

What is man that You [God] are mindful of him,
the son of man that You care for him?
[even though a human being is a speck]
You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory [*dignitas*] and honor.
You have made him ruler over the works of Your hands;
You put everything under his feet (Psalm 8:4-6).

The contemporary West, especially Europe, is now busy amputating its soul. It is rejecting the source of its greatness – that is, the truth revealed by God’s word which defined the value of every individual and redefined the purpose and the function of the state. The West is discarding the source of its morality, rationality, family, and humanity: the intellectual foundation of human rights, justice, compassion, care and education. In this depressing environment one comforting fact for me (as an Indian) is that Bollywood movies such as “Stars on Earth” (*Taree Jamin Par*) are trying to change India by injecting into our culture the biblical idea of the dignity of every child. Serving a weak, unwanted girl may be a more attractive idea than killing her but why should Sheela’s parents pay the price to follow an idea simply because it sounds attractive? Why not choose an easier, convenient and cheaper course of action: kill her? Helen Keller’s parents chose the emotionally and monetarily costly course because they believed that as an immortal soul, she was infinitely valuable. It is truth that transforms.

But why should I take the trouble to transform a society? Should I not be tolerant and allow other people the freedom to live according to their own beliefs and cultures?