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**LISTENING TO THE GROANING OF MOTHER EARTH.
A CHALLENGE AND AN INVITATION TO MOVE BEYOND ECOLOGY,
THROUGH *ECOFILIA* TO *ECOSOPHY* – THE NECESSITY
FOR A RELEVANT SPIRITUALITY TODAY**

Abstract. All over the world there is a great concern about Global Warming, migration, wars, poverty, inhumanity, etc. In addition, there is a great concern about Mother Earth as it is being exploited for the sake of profit for a few, and denying opportunities and necessities to the vast majority. In this paper our concern is very much similar because, if we have to build up a relevant spirituality it should be in this context eco-centred which also means humanity-centred. Perhaps, the rich of the Earth have become too selfish that their humaneness seems to have disappeared, and believe only in manipulation and exploitation, and Mother Earth is the greatest victim, which in turn affects the whole humanity. Hence, as Raimon Panikkar says an Ecology which is a pure science is not enough, but we need *Ecofilia* (friendship with the Earth) and *Ecosophy* (wisdom of the Earth); we need to learn from the wisdom of Mother Earth, which is sadly lacking today. The effects of the great exploitative wonder Globalization have been disastrous, especially for the developing and underdeveloped nations, and rich countries made use of it for economic colonisation, thus bringing a big majority under thorough economic exploitation. It is here that a new counter-culture and a thoroughly radical spirituality need to evolve, and if need be on the basis of a revolution. We need prophets of such spirituality who will denounce the existing exploitative structures and announce the coming a new society established in peace, justice, and harmony – a new Heaven and a new Earth. The sad fact is that such prophets are extremely lacking being afraid of the ruling parties they do not want to risk their lives. We shall not be proclaimers of doom but prophets and proclaimers of hope that a new society can be built through our commitment to justice, equality, and liberty. Let us take up this mission.

Keywords: *Ahimsa, Ecofilia, Ecosophy, counter-culture, cosmotheandric, demythification, interbeing, cosmology, Mokṣa, Navasūtrāṇi, Nirvāṇa, responsibility*

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Introduction

We are all aware of the dangers that confront us because of the denuding of Mother Earth, and its consequences. The recent flash floods that killed thousands and destroyed property worth crores of rupees in Uttarakhand (North India) have shown that these were man-made disasters because of the avarice and greed of the human beings. The Chipko movement which protected such naturally sensitive areas have fallen prey to the unbridled exploitation by various groups of people supported by the powers that be caused such immense damage. But yet be sure these natural disasters are not going to open the eyes of the people who are blinded by only a single motive – that of profit by hook or crook, although they themselves are at risk and endanger their own lives and that of their dependents. It is in this context that we who claim to be enlightened in various ways need to wake up from our slumber and act with determination and haste lest the future of the whole humankind and that of the whole environment be at risk. In this endeavour both theory and praxis need to go hand in hand. Just as we highlight the tragedies we need to suggest a change of attitude through enlightenment drawing upon the ancient wisdom and modern scientific discoveries, suggesting to move away from technocracy to respect for Mother Earth and the whole genus of living beings. Hence, in this paper what we aim to do is to reflect a little more deeply and suggest that we should not be satisfied with mere ecology, even the so-called Deep Ecology but move towards the *Ecofilia* and *Ecosophy*. Perhaps we could call this dialectics – *Ecology* → *Ecofilia* → *Ecosophy*, somewhat drawing inspiration from the great dialectical philosopher – Hegel. But in this presentation, I am very dependent on the thoughts of my friend and guru – Prof. Raimon Panikkar, who even coined some of these terms. He coined another important term and on which he based his later thought and approach calling it “Cosmotheandric”. He even advocated a spirituality based on such an approach, and coined beautiful terms like “sacred secularity, cultural disarmament, *kairological* moments, interculturality, etc.”²

² Since many of our readers may not be familiar with the great philosopher-theologian and indologist Prof. Raimon Panikkar of happy memory I shall give a brief introduction to him here as I have known him and spent quite bit of time in Barcelona, his native place, and here in India. He had an Indian (from Kerala) Hindu father and a Spanish

We shall limit ourselves to our specified topic and reflect how to bring about change in our own attitudes doing a lot of self-critiquing and questioning, and try to challenge our own self-complacency.

Meaning of the Terms

We are using three important terms in our discussion – *Ecology*, *Ecofilia* and *Ecosophy*. All these are based on the Greek language: the first term coined from *Eco* + *logos* (έκο-λογός) = science of the earth, *Eco* + *filia* (έκο-ψιλία) = friendship with the earth, and *Eco* + *Sophia* (έκο-σοψία) = wisdom of the earth. In the first term there is a clear-cut duality expressed namely the Earth is made an object of a subject's analysis; and hence there is a lot of imposition of the pre-suppositions of the subject on the object, and the analysis is done not with any prescribed ethics or norm but Earth as an object to be made use of. At present there may be some amount biological ethics being brought in because of the impending danger that may overtake us. In the second term, *Ecofilia*, there is a movement from reducing the Earth to an object to a companion as if, because the term *filia* means friendship. As we can guess friendship is possible only between beings who can acknowledge one another as inter-subjective and inter-protective. A true friendship is not possible in a relationship of over-protection or domination. In friendship there is an assurance given:

mother. He is the eldest son from the second wife of his father, and he did most of his studies in Europe and obtained three doctorates – in Chemistry, Philosophy and Theology. He taught in Spain, in Benares Hindu University, Mysore University, Harvard, California, Oxford and many other European universities. He spent nearly a quarter of a century at California University as the professor and the head of the department of religious studies at Santa Barbara. He knew most of the European languages, Sanskrit and Hindi. His was a wisdom unparalleled in many ways, and remained a critic of the modern technocracy wrote voluminously on many subjects related to religion, dialogue, peace, etc. Some of his important books are: *Vedic Mantra Manjari*, *Cosmotheandric Experience*, *Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, *Fullness of Man*, *Silence of God: The Answer of the Buddha*, *Rhythm of Being: Gifford Lectures*, *Cultural Disarmament – The Way to Peace*, *Interreligious Dialogue*, *Intra-religious Dialogue*, *Invisible Harmony*, *A Dwelling Place of Wisdom*, *De La Mystica*, an attempt is being made to publish *Omnia Opera* of Panikkar. The Italian version is already out. We in India need to become a little more acquainted with his thoughts and study them in depth.

“I shall be there for you,” and there is also a certain mutuality expressed in the notion of friendship; there cannot be a one-way friendship. Thus, we find that in *ecofilia* there is a little more intimacy expressed. This leads us to the final term of our discourse – *Ecosophy*, the wisdom of the earth. Here it is not the subject who imposes a concept or a notion upon the object but the Earth itself is inviting the human to learn from her, thus calling for an attitude of receptivity from the part of the human being. Wisdom is the result of enlightenment and an attitude of humility, and it will call for commitment. Wisdom is not so much the result of analysis and research but is more of intuition, and it is more a gift rather than an attainment. Hence, one remains always grateful for this gift, and that attitude makes one more receptive. The attitude of Receptivity is very much at the core of wisdom (*Sophia*). Wisdom also indicates a willingness to share and be co-responsible.

1. Ecofilia, Ecosophy, and Responsibility

We have shown briefly the meaning of the first two terms, and now we need to proceed to analyze them in some detail and also try to understand in some depth the notion of Responsibility. Aware of the fact that the whole ecosystem is in peril, there need to be a shift of emphasis to the ecosystem, accompanied by the acceptance that the individual or the species can survive only within a viable ecosystem, there comes the urgency for a new ethical system based on relationships. The key quality in ethical relationships is responsibility, responsibility as a particular kind of responding to biodiversity in my species and in my ecosystem. My response is, consciously or not, shaped by my belonging there in a state of ‘*inter-esse*,’ *interbeing*, in which my *inter-ests*, are contingent, on the reality of being sustained in an ecosystem I share not only with those of my own species but with myriads of others. How do I exercise my responsibility when I am part of so many different wholes? In what spirit do I respond? Perhaps, the short and veritable answer is non-violent response in the spirit of compassion. Response to the other in this way constitutes the ethical relationship required by biodiversity. Else what will come about is destruction, and this destruction occurs at many

levels: the personal, interpersonal, transpersonal and the communal, the individual and the systemic (Primavesi 1998, 52-53).

Emmanuel Levinas, one of the great contemporary philosophers of the West, gives a beautiful formulation regarding the responsibility for the quality of interactions. He holds that life's work consists in proclaiming the primacy of ethics. Taking for example the norm: "Thou shall not kill," he shows that this norm implies "You shall do everything so that the other lives" (Levinas 1984, 41). As is well known the image of 'the Face' has a predominant place in Levinas's philosophy. Face stands for what one cannot kill, or at least it is that whose meaning consists in saying "thou shall not kill". It is true murder takes place, but prohibition against killing renders murder evil; one may kill but it is universally acknowledged that it is better not to kill. The moral law still has relevance because the face of the sufferer remains calling us to responsibility. This resonates well with Gandhi's advice: "Whenever you are in doubt, apply the following test: recall the face of the poorest and weakest person you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be any use to that person". The moral law stands because the evidence of its violation is still there within the face of the sufferer.

1.1. Move towards Eco-centric Ethics

The sad aspect of human search for ethics and morality is very much anthropocentric, and even very much male dominated. We need to extend the notion of ethics to include other species and work out an ecological evolution which bases its origin in the tendency of interdependent individuals or groups to evolve modes of recognition and cooperation. This we call symbiosis – the complex cooperative mechanisms which evolve between organisms and their environments. We do not find any meaningful ethics developed with regard to human being's relation to land, and to the animals and plants which grow upon it, although governments have enacted some regulations with regard to the forests, which are also continuously being violated especially by multinational companies. The extension of ethics to this third dimension is an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity. The land ethics simply enlarges the boundaries

of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals – the diversity of life in all its manifestations. Levinas' concept of 'interessence,' a being linked to all entities whose interrelations are determined by each being's endeavour to maintain and expand its own existence, infers that if the nonviolent relation between humans is the trace of God, and that trace is 'proximity of God in the face of the other,' then the quality of that relation must inform all our interbeing. We know that the world-wide response to the loss of biodiversity has been extremely slow, even after the signing of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It calls for responsibility that goes beyond what I do to the attitudes which inform all relationships (Primavesi 1998, 54-55).

When a person is involved in environmental ethics his/her relationship to all aspects of life becomes transformed; many questions such as how I live, and what choices are being made with regard to life, consumerism, etc., arise. My choices involve a lot of relationship both overt and covert, and a sincere and conscientious person will have to ask many questions to himself/herself as to how his/her actions affect others. My responsibility is universal and is not limited to those whose faces I can see. The complexity of our interbeing within an ecosystem is such that we cannot limit our responsibility to those who are nearest to us. World-wide webs of trade, pollution and resources connect us to others we never see or meet. In such a situation a particularly theological response would be that this issue which religions have neglected for long should be taken up as a priority especially in the field of interreligious dialogue. The hostility between religions and consequent wars has been a contributory factor in the destruction of biodiversity. Religion is a major factor both in peace and war; and the challenge of religions is to make human beings more peaceful, and lead their followers to respect earth and the biodiversity. Here the Indian attitude of seeing as Mother Earth will be greatly beneficial (Primavesi 1998, 56; Manimala 2009, 551-554).

Today it is commonly acknowledged that the creation account in the Bible has been wrongly interpreted. It was thought that just because human beings were created at the end, Man is the crown and superior to all creatures, and that he is called to master and manipulate nature which was seen as opposed to him. Man was projected as the controller and ruler of the world having the power to deal with nature as he wishes. Ever

since Francis Bacon, the relationship between human beings and nature has been continually described as relationship of master to a slave. Up to now the creations of human history have led only to nature's depletion. Today we are becoming conscientious of the peril we are in unless there is a different attitude being shown to nature. If the common catastrophe of human beings and the earth is still avertable at all, then it is certainly only by synchronizing human history with the history of nature, and if the experiment of modern times is carried out 'in accordance with nature' and not in opposition to nature, or at nature's expense. For the survival of the human beings and the whole of creation there needs to be a reversal of attitude. In order to arrive at a viable symbiosis between human society and natural environments, it is essential to 'cool off' human history, and to slow down its one-sided varieties of progress. Our understanding of time must be brought into harmony with the laws of life and the rhythms of nature, in the environment and in the bodily nature of human beings themselves. This is urgent because among human beings the progress of one group is always achieved at the cost of other groups. If technological progress is achieved at the expense of nature or the coming generations, this progress is illusory and fictitious. We stand in need of more systems of equilibrium in order to keep the advancing processes of history within bounds and to make them enduring. The relationship between progress and equilibrium in the human and natural systems must be brought into a coordinated, fluid equilibrium if the cost-utility accounts are to be set up realistically and honestly, and if the sum is to come out right (see Moltmann 1989, 323; Manimala 2009, 554-555).

1.2. Necessity of All-inclusive History

In order to understand the necessary *ethical* limitations of human history it is incumbent on us to make the *natural* limitations of the history of human beings clear to ourselves. Human history runs its course within the great comprehensive ecosystem: earth, sun, moon and the stellar galaxies, and these affect human history. Every gaze into immeasurable spaces of the stellar systems and galaxies cuts human history down to

scale, showing it to be a small and limited phenomenon in the evolution of life on this one single planet Earth. The insights and reflections of the various sciences of today should reduce the Earth and the human history that is played out there to their proper proportions, showing their limits, when we think of the heavens and the innumerable spaces of the invisible worlds. History has become too anthropocentric, and everything was thought to be at the disposal of and for the use of human beings since Man is the crown of creation. Hence, history needs to become more ecocentric or cosmocentric and human beings playing their small role in this huge expanse. There is the rhythm of being at work and the more we attune ourselves to this rhythm in our space and time the better and meaningful our existence will turn out to be. The more men and women discover the meaning of their lives in joy in existence, instead of in doing and achieving (performance), the better they will be able to keep their economic, social and political history within proper bounds. "The experience of history" which is the human prerogative, is annulled and at the same time preserved and embraced in meditation, contemplation and in the doxology of the Eternal One. Our health can be restored if we discover serenity in the midst of all our activities. It is possible to assert that "the crown of history" is the Sabbath, because without the Sabbath quiet history becomes self-destruction of humanity; but through Sabbath rest history is sanctified with the divine measure and blessed with the measure of true humanity (Manimala 2009, 555)³.

It is in this context that Panikkar's proposal of *ecofilia* and *ecosophy* come into focus. According to him a mere study of the Earth through ecology will not do, but a true love and affection for the Earth and the whole Cosmos is necessary. One of the reasons for the evolution of his concept of cosmotheandricism is this association with the earth and the rest of the cosmos. For him the whole reality – Man, Nature and the

³ I would suggest to the reader to refer to Panikkar's most important book: *The Rhythm of Being: Gifford Lectures* (Orbis Books), in which he beautifully analyses time, space and rhythm. This book is, indeed, a masterpiece; although Panikkar himself thought that it is not complete as he wanted to write the last chapter on: "The Survival of Being," which he could not achieve, and concluded the book with a one-page epilogue that portrays his wisdom and intellectual humility.

Divine – is continuous there is no break up or discontinuity; it has a triple dimension and is to be seen as a continuous whole. We have to understand the Nature as the *oikos* (ὄικος), the house, habitat of Man.⁴ Here the divine is subsumed in Nature, which is not merely “natural” but sacred, and ultimately one with the divine. The entire World is Man’s habitat; he lives and cultivates it. There is no need for him to contemplate Nature, since he himself belongs to it. All his actions are done on this Earth (*karmabhūmi*). He is neither a spectator nor an actor on Earth, but its natural product. Man is part of the whole, and communion with reality is coextensive here with the absence of separating and reflective self-consciousness (Panikkar 1998, 24-25). Nature inspires awe, elicits worship, needs to be propitiated; she is often considered to be the superior term of a personal relationship. Nature engenders gods, living beings, people and all sorts of beings. She is the great begetter; she is *natura naturans* as much as *natura naturata*, just as for Greeks *physis* (φύσις) is the dynamic principle of everything. In many cultures Nature or Earth is called ‘the mother’ (Panikkar 1972, 23f)⁵. Since the whole of reality stands in interrelatedness exclusion of one aspect will automatically affect the other, the harm done to one aspect of reality is equally a blot to the rest of it. Hence today’s philosophy, theology, spirituality, etc., if they are to be relevant, have to take into serious concern the eco-diversity and eco-suffering.

1.3. Role of Religions – Fight for Eco-human Well-being

Today the whole religious experience needs to be grounded differently as Paul Knitter has pointed out. According to him if religions are to be relevant they have to realize that ‘eco-human well-being’ is a criterion for religious truth. Today good many thinkers in science, philosophy and theology are suggesting that the Earth is providing us not only with a context for experiencing the Divine/Truth in a vast variety of ways, but also with a common story by which we can better understand our

⁴ Here one could refer to the Sanskrit term *vis*, which means man’s house. Man is *vispati*, the householder [cf. *Vesah*, *vicinus* (Lat.), neighbour, and *vicus*, a group of houses].

⁵ Panikkar tries to show the new understanding of Nature in many books and papers. Cf. *El Concepto de naturaleza* (1972, 23f).

different religious experiences, coordinate them, and even give them a unified shape. Today the Earth itself is offering all humans (belonging to all cultures and religions) *a common cosmological story*. With our new awareness of the universe and our sense of ecological kinship with it, we could speak of the universe as a larger religious community in which the particular and diverse religious communities of history can now recognize one another and come to see how their individual stories are part of the universe story. When religion begins to appreciate that the primary sacred community is the universe itself, then it realizes in a more and sacred perspective the sacred community is the Earth community. The human community becomes sacred through its participation in the larger planetary community (cf. Knitter 1995, 118-121).

The knowledge that we have today about the Earth and the universe provides not only the possibility of a shared religious story but also with the necessity of a common ethical task. It is especially on the ethical level that the universe story can exercise a practical unifying force among the religions as well as other disciplines; and in this our common creating story can help us for providing a compelling response. There is danger lurking beneath, a “flirting with the extinction of our species” as we witness, and cause the extinction of thousands of other species. The task of preventing this suicide and the broader genocide is the most compelling and unsettling ethical imperative facing humankind today. There seems to be on the horizon the closing down of the Earth’s most basic systems, which support us and all other forms of life. Our Earth beautiful in its mysterious connectedness and evolution is menaced by the devastation that the human species has wrought upon it. The Earth community currently faces through the dynamics of an increasingly manipulative, globalized, consumption-oriented political economy based on rapacious growth and the supposedly pragmatic destruction of being-in-relation. Hence, religions and other institutions need to urgently fight for an eco-human well-being (*soteria*, liberation, *moksa*, *nirvāna*). It is for the justice of the Earth that we need to fight, and for this we need to give up all other considerations for the moment and take up this gigantic task in a common concerted effort. Precisely because human and ecological suffering is both *universal* and *immediate* it can serve persons of all cues with a common context and criterion for assessing truth claims. In its universality, human

and ecological suffering confronts and affects us all; in its immediacy it has a raw reality and challenge that is somehow beyond differing interpretations of it (cf. Knitter 1995, 122-127).

1.4. Navasūtrāṇi for a Meaningful Ecosophy

Thinkers of Deep Ecology and other great masters have suggested various principles for maintaining a good ecological system with a diversity which we are unable to fathom. Following Panikkar's way of putting principles in the form of *sūtras* here I am attempting at nine principles (*navasūtrāṇi*) which should guide all our efforts at the restoration of the ecological balance. Not that they are exhaustive but are some basic principles we should adhere to.

1. The whole ecosystem is a chain of beings with interrelationship and inner worth. They are of immense value and no one has the right to disrupt this relationship or destroy their worth.
2. All need to respect the rich biodiversity and there should not be any priority or exclusive greatness attributed to any being as every species is unique.
3. Human beings are called to shepherd Nature and not to exploit it. They can make use of Nature for the satisfaction of their basic needs.
4. In the name of development and growth there should not be denuding of Nature because she is our Mother, and depleting of resources should be avoided as these places the future of the World in jeopardy.
5. Since the species are disappearing at an alarming speed policy that are adopted and found to be harmful should urgently be changed.
6. The norm of 'higher standard of living' should be modified to "respect for all forms of life and Mother Earth," and thus bring about an ecological balance.
7. In the wake of Global Warming an all-out effort should be made by all nations to reduce gas emission. This should not be seen as a problem of some nations and thus minimize the efforts.

8. There should be an immediate reduction and stoppage of production of nuclear weapons and their sale. All chemical weapons should be destroyed forthwith, and no nation should be excluded from this responsibility. Without total disarmament life in its various forms is at the risk of extinction; the after effects of the usage of nuclear weapons are unpredictable.
9. A peaceful living in an ecologically balanced Nature is possible only through the acceptance and practice of *Ahimsa*, which does not mean not to do harm to human beings, but a principle which supports and promotes all forms of life. *Ahimsa* should be exercised not only among human beings but should be applied to the whole of Nature.

2. Promotion of Ahimsa and a New Spirituality for a Sustainable Ecosystem

As a conclusion to this paper I would suggest the great Indian virtue of *Ahimsa* be promoted, and that we arrive at a new spirituality which will promote and make life flourish in its variety of forms. Very often *Ahimsa* has been interpreted in a negative meaning 'not to do any harm to humans,' but an integral meaning of the term is something different. It means not only the absence of doing harm especially to human beings but it means promotion of life. We can say it is justice in praxis; justice is not giving what is his/her due but doing all that is required to give fullness of life. *Ahimsa* calls for wishing the good of the other in thought, word and deed, and doing everything one can to promote life. This is the meaning of *Ahimsa* especially in the Jaina understanding. Life is sacred and doing harm to life is a desecration.

When we accept life in the above described way we need a spirituality to sustain it. The term 'spirituality' is not to be taken in the sense of opposition to the secular or as meant for some elite group of people, but the cosmotheandric spirituality tries to integrate both the secular and the sacred. The whole cosmos is filled with life and is life-generating. Man, as the microcosm, is a model but is not in a privileged position to dominate the Earth. The three worlds – Heaven, Earth and Man – share in the same adventure of life (cf. Manimala 2009, 63). Earth

is seen as reverberating with life from two perspectives, first is the solidity and, hence the centrality of the Earth; the second is her receptivity and, accordingly, her expansiveness. For indicating these two aspects Indian tradition uses two terms – *bhūmi* for the first aspect, and *prthvi* for the second. The Earth supports everything and also is an ever-expanding horizon. The cosmos is a 'hierophany,' a sacred manifestation. The Earth is not only the grounding reality, but also brings forth realities; she is the womb of beings. The Earth is the *locus* where the great manifestation of life takes place, and it is the domain of our hope (e.g. the hope of the farmer, miner, etc.). After having discovered the double symbolism of the Earth we need to realize that she has a soul and is alive; but we should overcome the duality of the body and soul. The Earth is not a corpse enlivened by a soul; it has a spontaneity with its own pattern and freedom. What is called for is the greatest respect for Mother Earth (cf. Panikkar 1972, 137-139).

Panikkar also shows the need to move from cosmology to '*kosmology*' although the distinction is not very clear to an ordinary reader. He says by *kosmology* is meant the science (in the classical meaning of the term) about the holistic sense of the *kosmos*. *Kosmology* (*kosmos legein*, *κοσμος λεγέιν*) is a "reading" of the *kosmos*, the disclosure of the world to our human consciousness by means of all forms of knowledge we may possess. Humans should try to hear and understand by attuning themselves to the music of the world, to the mysteries of the *kosmos*. On the other hand, *Cosmology*, as Panikkar understands, is the result of the scientific *ratio* applied to the *kosmos*, which is open to the rational *logos*. *Kosmology* deals with how Man envisions the universe, how the *kosmos* displays itself to Man, and with the experience of the universe of which Man is a part helps to discover the real universe in which he lives. *Kosmological* is paramount and also there will be conflicting cosmologies. In order to overcome this conflict what we stand in need of is an Emerging Mythos, and it will call for 'demythification' and a new 'remythification.' A mere scientific concept will not do, one should become capable of feeling and hearing the music of the universe. Panikkar's proposal is the cosmotheandric mythos.⁶

⁶ Panikkar proposes this in his famous book *The Rhythm of Being: The Gifford Lectures* to which we have referred earlier. He is very much aware of the meaning of the words

Another important character to be noted is temporality. The world is in movement and is not a dead reality. Being and Time are intimately connected; time is not an accident to Being; Being itself is temporal. Time is the peculiar way each being exists and lasts. Gradually Time became identified with its quantitative parameter under the assumption that there was a univocal correspondence of “measured time” to the richer reality of time. Temporality is a peculiar form of human existence and, as such, not just a freeway along which Man drives, but part and parcel of his/her own constitution. The past is not left behind, but accumulated in the present, the future is not just to come, but to some extent also effective (as hope) in the present. Time is the “Lord who works change in beings.” Time created the Earth, in time is consciousness; and in time is life (*prana*). Indian tradition expresses various aspects of Time by using words like *pran*, *jīv-*, *jīvanam*, *āyus*, etc. (Panikkar 1972, 140-142). In time Man enters into a relationship with the Earth, which is thoroughly transformed, and it becomes a ‘personal’ relationship. We can have an I-It relationship with the Earth, but that will not reveal meaning of Life to us. Things have a face for us, they have a special language of their own; they put us at ease or make us uncomfortable. Martin Buber, the famous philosopher of inter-personal relationship, used to say that even a tree can have an I-Thou (personal) relationship with us. As is clear a personal relationship is not one-sided; it elicits a response and registers a certain initiative from the other side as well. Things are not indifferent to us, although in general we cannot measure their “personal” reactions. Still, at times we feel certain things “speak” to us and others repel us; there are things we like because we are convinced they like us. The environment belongs to me and not only influences me, but is part and parcel of myself (Manimala 2009, 64-65).

Our effort was to show how the whole cosmos is in a network of relationship, and it is this relationship that sustains all. Friction or breakage of this relationship brings about unpredictable harm, and to restore such a relationship calls for tremendous effort. Harmony of all beings is something that has to be highlighted and human beings with

he chooses and at times gives a new meaning and interpretation and also coins new words, not for the sake of neologism, to express his ideas better.

all the great advancements infuses disharmony into creation. Let us make a concerted effort for reinstatement of eco-balance and arrive at a cosmological harmony. There are simple ways to contribute to this ecological equilibrium as Dr. Mathaai, the Nobel Laureate did, planting millions of trees to save the people and nature. She took it up as a life mission, and today we need such committed people for saving our planet earth⁷. This calls for a counter-culture that will challenge the principle of maximum profit through exploitation and cut-throat competition, and unbridled development and progress.

3. A Relevant Spirituality for Today Based on the Notion of Ubuntu

Science has progressed beyond limits even endangering human existence, and even survival of all that live on Mother Earth. The Spirituality today calls for a mission to be responsible for human survival as well as the integrity of all creation. This is possible, as I perceive, on a deeper understanding of the African notion of Ubuntu. This a simple term they use to communicate the inter-dependent existence. This notion occurred in a very simple act of a missionary. A white missionary working in Africa on a Christmas day wanted the celebration with the small children. He hid a 'big treasure' a few hundred feet away from the children with a flag indicating the place where the treasure is hidden. Then he told the children to run; and the condition was that one who reaches the spot first will get the whole prize (it was small bag filled with chocolates). Children began running and one of them very much ahead and almost reached the spot. When he looked back he found others still far away, and he waited there so that others too may reach the spot in order to claim the prize together. They went there and found the bag of chocolates, and holding it together lifted up the bag. The missionary was surprised and asked the

⁷ The contribution each one can make is very valuable howsoever small or insignificant it may appear to be in the sight of modern scientific minded person. Here I would like to refer to a small booklet in Malayalam: *Nohayude Kathayum Kathayile Rehasyangalum* by Prof. S. Sivadas (Ernakulam: Varna Press, 2012). It is a book meant for children, and the book beautifully illustrates through the story of Noah in the Bible how the whole ecosystem consists of millions of species with inter-relationship and inter-dependence.

boy who reached the spot first, “why he didn’t get there and take the prize and claim whole of it?”. He shouted *Ubuntu*. This means “I am because you are,” and “You are because I am.” What a beautiful notion of intersubjective and interdependent existence; this is what we can call true spirituality. The direction of whole human thinking has to take such a direction.

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