

Editorial

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES

The UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015 adopted a Resolution (70/1) with a Charter of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 Targets with 232 indicators to be achieved by 2030 for people and planet, prosperity and peace. The agenda sees the 17 goals interlinked and inclusive, all individuals, societies, and institutions as stakeholders for the sustainable future, with rights and duties. The Resolution calls for Global Partnership for Sustainable Development and reminds everyone: "We can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet. The world will be a better place in 2030 if we succeed in our objectives."

The critiques of the global Agenda observe that they are difficult to implement, as people are after unlimited economic development and material comforts though the resources of the planet are limited. Though the absolute poverty has decreased substantially, through various developmental projects, economic and social inequalities are ever increasing to intolerable levels within and among nations, and the disadvantaged groups suffer disproportionately from the disastrous effects of market driven development and short-term electoral goals of power politics. As a result of human interventions, our common home is in danger and many of our fellow human beings and other living beings suffer. The present state of the people and planet is the result of human hubris and greed, a technocratic paradigm driven by the search for maximum profit and instant gratification.

The COVID19 pandemic has hit the world and the global efforts on SDGs considerably. As per Oxfam report, "Only one in six countries assessed for the [Commitment to Reducing Inequality] CRI Index 2020 were spending enough on health, only a third of the global workforce had adequate social protection, and in more than 100 countries at least one in three workers had no labour protection such as sick pay. As a result, many have faced death and destitution, and inequality is increasing dramatically."

Realising the noble goal of SDGs is not just an economic development problem that could be solved through science and technology, market economy, and political power; it is an ethical problem and needs ethical vision and action plan. The sustainable development often examines socio-economic and environmental aspects and set aside ethical issues – the question of what is the ‘right’ thing to do. Sustainable lifestyles cannot be implemented without strong ethical principles. A development model based on GDP that does not increase the well-being and happiness for the majority of the people today and for the future generations is not ethical. “We have gone ahead at breakneck speed,” said Pope Francis during his prayer for the world in the context of COVID-19 Pandemic – “feeling powerful and able to do anything. Greedy for profit, we let ourselves get caught up in things, and lured away by haste. We did not stop at your reproach to us, we were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet.”

As moral agents, ethics should guide our partnerships for people and planet, for peace and prosperity. Human beings are caretakers (*homo custos*) of the earth and all who are living (people and other living species) in this common home, in collaboration and solidarity with all. Besides economics and politics, aesthetic and religious dimensions, which are conspicuously absent from SDG, are also foundational elements of being human. Together with science and technology, humanities and social sciences, traditional wisdom and religions contribute to the prosperity and peace for people and planet, provided they are guided by solid ethical principles and effective action plans.

The *Journal of Dharma* volume 46 (2021) investigates human quest ‘Towards Sustainable Societies’ and explores the Ethical interface of Sustainable Development Goals and the roles of educational, economic, political, legal, and religious policies, systems, and institutions, bringing together research from different academic fields including Literature, Media, Environmental Sciences, Law, Economics, Philosophy, and Religious studies. Vol. 46.1. focus on “Towards Sustainable Societies: People, Ethics, and Development.” In the Preamble of the SDG Agenda, we read: “We

are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment." People are the focus of the SDG, especially the first five goals in the Agenda; Poverty (SDG 1), Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3), Quality Education (SDG 4), and Gender Equality (SDG 5) are directly concerning the fundamental needs and well-being of people. Global poverty is a very serious problem, interlinked with hunger, health, education, and gender equality. The poorest in the world are often hungry, sick, illiterate, and the women and children suffer more. To make progress against poverty is therefore a matter of prime importance for all.

Often in the development projects the most in need are left behind, and many people regardless of income, continue to live without full rights and suffer from inequality. The greatest sin of the world is that millions are living in extreme starvation and hunger, especially in the developing countries. According to the World Food Programme, 135 million people suffer from acute hunger largely due to human conflicts, climate change, and economic downturns. It is unlikely that we could "by 2030 end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular, the poor and people in vulnerable situations including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round" (SDG 2.1). COVID-19 made the situation worse: "COVID could drive the number of people living in extreme poverty to over 1 billion by 2030, with a quarter of a billion pushed into extreme poverty as a direct result of the pandemic" (UNDP). We must rethink how we grow, share and consume our food.

Among the sustainable goals, SDG 4 and 5 are critical as they provide socio economic success and the overall success of Agenda 2030. Only quality education and gender equality can ensure that all people acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable lifestyles, ethical values, and a culture of peace and prosperity for people and planet. Due to COVID-19 pandemic more than 91 per cent of students worldwide suffered not only learning difficulties but around 370 million children who depend on school meals suffered terribly. Similarly, gender equality is

fundamental for a prosperous, peaceful and sustainable world. The disastrous effects of the COVID19 are reversing the limited progress, widening the existing inequalities for girls and women in all fields of poverty, health, education, job, peace and security.

In the first article of this issue of the Journal of Dharma, titled "Promoting Human Rights Literacy among School Children Through Design Education," Kuo-Kuang Fan and Chia-Lin Chang critically and creatively explore ways to promote the cognition and design skills of elementary school students on human rights through the process of design education and to cultivate their attitude towards sustainable development that values human dignity. In the curriculum process, the researchers guided the students to select human rights problems that could be found in the community and propose design solutions to these problems. Through the induction of observation focus, group interviews, design work analysis, and other methods, the researchers could understand the students' learning performance and experience. The study found that students' active participation in the design practice of human rights could effectively construct their concept and identity of human dignity, which made the network system of learning concepts more complete and concrete, promoting the possibility of sustainable development.

Seeing the increasing misery of Koreans as a signal to the frustration of desire and social incongruity, Soo-Jin Lee and Seok Kim provide a diagnosis and suggests solutions through art, based on a psychoanalytic perspective, in their research article, "Art Therapy for Harmonizing Desire and Life in Korean Society." Anxiety has its fair share of negative repercussions such as fear, powerlessness, and sadness; it also enables inner inspection and acts as a signal of existence that can re-establish desire. Through a case study, the paper argues that art therapy can help individuals to understand their existence and restore intersubjective relationships and go toward sustainable society. This is because art is ultimately an act of practice aiming at the gaze, an indicator of existence. In the end, the central goal of humanity and social development should be to make them coexist in an ethical horizon through the restoration of the 'original life.'

"The Idea of a Human Community of Shared Destiny" by Jing Guo examines President Xi Jinping's flagship vision, the idea of a Human Community of Shared Destiny for a more just and secure world and its relationship and contribution in the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). This shared destiny for humankind is a new paradigm that is an inheritance, innovation and development of Marxian philosophy and traditional Chinese wisdom. As the world's largest developing country, China envisages itself as an active initiator and builder of world peace and global development. On the basis of analysing the characteristics of the idea of a global community of shared future, this paper studies the relationship between China's vision and its potential in realising the various SDGs for the purpose of a common good and its realistic significance and value in the contemporary international society.

Delfo C. Canceran in his paper, "Indigenist Method: Doing Theological Research with the Indigenous Peoples," proposes an indigenist research methodology that interfaces the indigenous and western knowledges but prioritizes the former in knowledge production promoting the self-representation of the indigenous peoples in their communities. Documents on the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the SDGs support the indigenous peoples in their right to self-determination and self-representation. Instead of helping the indigenous peoples recover from colonization, scholars using western methodological and theoretical frameworks reinforce the re-colonization in their cognitive paradigms, and they are challenged to relearn from the indigenous peoples in their communities and to devise methodologies that represent the indigenous peoples in their scholarship and publication. To execute this research, theologians ought to engage into reflexivity as they face the indigenous peoples and to involve into teamwork collaborations with them and their spokespersons, and work together to rescue the indigenous worldviews and reassert their contributions in knowledge production.

The final essay of this issue, "Fashion and Consumer Culture of North Korean Women and the 'Cultural Turn' toward Harmony"

by Jein Do and Mincheol Park seeks to set a new direction for a 'Cultural Turn' toward harmony in re-examining the Korean Cold War to promote a sustainable inter-Korean scholarly dialogue and enhance mutual understanding. Based on the 'Cultural Turn' in Cold War studies, the concept of 'commonality' in 'Humanities for Unification' (*t'ongil inmunhak*) and discussions on the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (SDG 5) in the context of North Korea where 'gender equality' and '*namjonnyŏbi* (superior men, inferior women)' coexist. The interviews with North Korean defectors demonstrate the evolving state-society negotiations concerning standard and new styles, domestic and transnational means of consumption, and regulation and deregulation for the revitalization of socialism.

Acknowledging profound gratitude to all the scholars and researchers who responded to the vision of a sustainable world and suggested solutions for the wellbeing of all people and whole planet, and sharing the hope that all of us will take decisions for a sustainable future for all, may I submit this issue of the *Journal of Dharma* on "Towards Sustainable Societies: People, Ethics, and Development" for your reading and reflection.

Jose Nandhikkara
Editor-in-Chief

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