

Editorial

SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY AND RELIGIOSITY

Often a binary relation is noted between material and spiritual wealth, Earth and heaven, favouring the spiritual over the material and the heaven over the Earth. With modernity, we see an overturning of this binary, a reversal of values, preferring the material over the spiritual and the earthly over the heavenly. Religions generally critique materialistic values and ask believers to give up bodily and worldly pleasures for the sake of eternal happiness and to devote themselves to austerity, asceticism, and spirituality. Modernity promotes development aided by science and technology and governed by the market economy and liberal democracy, leading to a consumeristic lifestyle. With the progress of science, technology, and material wealth, religious beliefs became less important for many people, and with the separation of religion and state in secular democracies, religious practices were limited to the private realm. It is also contended that religion holds back economic development. There are also attempts to use material wealth for spiritual wealth, especially through charity, seeing the earthly life as a preparation for the heavenly life. It is also seen in some traditions using spiritual power for material prosperity. Religions do not limit growth and development to the material dimension but promote holistic development, including people's physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, and spiritual well-being. No dimension of life is foreign to the religious dimension of life, and religions promote virtuous life, which supports integral development. Pope Paul VI observed, "All things human are our concern. We share with the whole of the human race a common nature, a common life, with all its gifts and all its problems" (97). The relationship between religion and prosperity is manifold; binaries cannot explain the complexities of the contemporary world or contribute to sustainable prosperity and peace for people and the planet.

The rationalistic culture led people to a market society, where people are valued based on their money power, rather than religious societies, where people are valued for their moral and

spiritual virtues. The technocratic and market-driven contemporary culture works towards economic prosperity provided by science and technology as the panacea to problems of people and planet. The green revolution, mechanisation of agriculture, globalisation of trade, progress in science, and waves of industrialisation indeed made nations wealthy, though it did not make all people wealthy or happy equally. In fact, with the implicit principle of the competitive world, the survival of the fittest, the gap between the rich and the poor increased through successive industrial revolutions and with the increase in inequality, prosperity became unsustainable. Moreover, a nation's development index is often measured as the total of economically relevant private and public assets and the GDP, which is often directly proportional to scientific and technological know-how. However, the development of a nation transcends money power and military power. To have sustainable prosperity, we need the enhancement of moral power; only that which is ethical is sustainable; therefore, we need ethical wealth creation and integral development. Ethical wealth consists of creating, distributing, and using assets, respecting the rights and dignity of people, other living beings, and the planet.

With the ecological turn of global policies, like sustainable development, the anthropocentric tendencies are revised, and the place of human beings in the cosmos is seen more holistically. In this context, returning to the traditional ethical and moral belief systems and practices propounded by world religions and faith traditions is found useful. As Tucker observed, "If the human mind has created compelling and coherent visions to inspire the flourishing of civilisations for the last five thousand years, surely that same rich and diverse religious imagination will continue to activate the energies and commitments needed to sustain life on the planet" (53). "Religious classics can prove meaningful in every age; they have an enduring power." Yet often they are viewed with disdain as a result of "the myopia of a certain rationalism" (Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 256). A world moving away from religious and spiritual values also moves away from the cries of the poor and the planet. "If there is no transcendent truth, in obedience to which man

achieves his full identity, then there is no sure principle for guaranteeing just relations between people" (John Paul II 849).

The ecological turn of the contemporary world challenges religious believers to re-read the scriptures for their ethical and ecological values and to revisit the manifold relations between religion and prosperity. The secular leadership, in turn, has to re-discover the value of religions in the pursuit of integral and sustainable prosperity; for a long time, the secular world – academia, market, and politics – have overrated material prosperity and promoted economics of more and told and retold the fairy tales of eternal economic prosperity. The secular world is blind to the fact that even when all possible economic problems are answered, the problems of life remain untouched. Market solutions are not sufficient to bring sustainable and integral prosperity to people. We need both science and religion to bring forth a sustainable, prosperous and peaceful global society. An ecological turn by religions and a religious turn by ecology will benefit people and the planet as religions can influence many people today.

Our focus in this issue of the Journal is to investigate and affirm the bond between religion and sustainability and to throw light on the contribution of *homo religiosus* in the humanity's project of moving toward sustainable societies. Despite the influence and efforts of modernism and rationalism, religion remains a fundamental dimension of human life and society and contributes to the construction and maintenance of sustainable prosperity and peace to people and planet. This issue of the Journal is a response to the premise that academia and industry, market and media should join hands with the political and religious institutions to bring about ethical policies with action plans to construct and sustain prosperity and peace for the people and the planet. As the Global Agenda 2030 reminds us, "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" (United Nations, 50). When the institutions of modernity – science and technology, market economy, and liberal democracy – failed to provide sustainable prosperity and peace for people and the planet, a return to religion is seen in many parts of the world, academia, and international policies. Religious perspectives are effective countercultural resources in the struggle for sustainable

peace and prosperity, and engaging with them is imperative, logically and morally. It would certainly contribute to the construction of sustainable prosperity if *homo religiosus* follow their religious principles and practices.

In the first article, "Well-Being and Prosperity: Multidirectional Disciplinary Interactions with Religion" by Manoj Morais, Joshy Joseph Karakunnel, Sebastian Perumbilly, Guydeuk Yeon, and Gerard Rassendren is paper, the authors examine literature from politics, economics, and psychology to understand religion's impact on these disciplines and vice versa. They find that the contemporary research literature in social sciences generally highlights the interaction between religion and various fields of knowledge in a unidirectional way and propose ways to bring together social scientists and religious scholars to facilitate the much-needed discussion on the multidirectional relationship between religion and social sciences, thereby paving the way toward the well-being of individuals and social transformation.

In modern Japan, Shintō was defined as a culture rather than a religion to align the freedom of religion with the ideas of the nation-state, making it possible for Shintō to be presented to the public as an obligatory public moral and ritual guide. Katsuhiko Kakei, a professor of Constitutional Law at the Tōkyō Imperial University, incorporated the spiritual tendency to depend on the Absolute into Shintō and changed it into a state-religion. "State Shintō Project for Spiritual and Social Common Good" by Byeongjin Kim and Yi-jin Park investigates Kakei's project to restore the spiritual common good of the Japanese, expand it into the social common good, and thereby pursue integral human development and prosperity.

Management of religious organisations has developed to the point where technology systems are highly complicated and managerial concerns are ubiquitous. Religious organisations need to consider the supporting roles that modern technology, notably computers, plays for them. The article, "Computerisation for Religious Organisations in Nigeria Promoting Sustainable Prosperity" by Peter O. O. Ottuh, Onos G. Idjakpo, and Anthony A. Uviekovo assesses the use of computerised systems by religious

organisations in Nigeria and the effect these systems had on their operational management approaches and services. Representatives from fifteen different religious organisations were chosen for the study in the Nigerian cities of Lagos, Asaba, Kaduna, and Lokoja. The research uses a phenomenological approach, and the results show that religious organisations must use computers in their management and social work to be more productive, keep better records, and promote sustainable prosperity.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus unravelled the essence of humankind through the metaphor of 'salt', and centuries later, Jean-Paul Sartre named 'nothingness' as the reality of the human being. "Salt and Nothingness: A *Mantra* from Jesus through Sartre towards Reduced Inequalities" by Avaneesh M. argues that, though from radically different schools of thought, Jesus and Sartre, in effect, are making the same point that all human beings hold within them the undeniable potential to question and negate the status quo to bring about a sustainable change in the world. Adopting 'salt and nothingness' as a single *mantra* could effectively conceive development plans and actions to curb extreme inequalities, thereby fostering a sustainable society. By exposing the relevance of Jesus' word in today's world, the article emphasises the need to bridge the gap between the 'sacred' and the 'secular' so that religious values can be effectively incorporated into achieving United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, especially towards Reduced Inequalities (SDG-10).

A Daoist sage is considered an ideal and sacred being. A passage in the *Zhuangzi* implies that a sage feels no emotions. Woo-Jin Jung proposes two interpretations of a sage's emotions in his article, "Daoist Art of Life: Interpreting Emotions of a Sage in the *Zhuangzi*:" i. The common people generally insist on their dispositions and judgments, which triggers emotions. Because a sage does not have this attitude, he does not feel the kind of emotions experienced by common people. ii. Nevertheless, a sage experiences emotions more abundantly because he effortlessly resonates with the situation, just as a mirror reflects an object as it is. A sage's resonant emotions may appear passive, but they

encompass activeness because a sage transforms others through resonance without harming them. This active passivity noted in a sage's emotions can be considered the fundamental notion of Daoist ethics.

The regional harvest festival of Onam of Keralam, in the South of India, is a religious celebration of harvest-linked prosperity, into which are dreams of egalitarianism, abundance, and generosity infused through the myth of Mahabali, the benign benevolent ruler of the land. "Celebrating Sustainable Prosperity: Onam as Earth Festival" by Prasant Palakkappillil examines Onam festival against the background of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and shows the elements of sustainability in the celebration and in the increasingly consumerist culture of the region, what possibly religious and educational institutions could do to reinvent the overarching virtue of sustainability through the celebration and the platforms available to them.

Acknowledging with gratitude the researchers who responded to the vision of a sustainable world and investigated the interface of religion and development for sustainable and integral prosperity, and calling for all of us to be part of the noble goals of the Global Agenda 2030, may I submit this issue of the *Journal of Dharma* on "Religion and Development for Prosperity" for your reading, reflection, and action.

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