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## A Brief Comparison of Imperialism and Colonialism In India and the Americas in the Context of the Indian Degenerative Vision of Human Evolution and History

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The first colonization of India we have news of was the one carried out by those that later on produced the Harrapo-Dravidian civilization over those that came to be called *adivasi* or primordial inhabitants—the resulting civilization being highly peaceful, rather egalitarian, and spiritually and technologically sophisticated. Then, most likely around 1000 BCE,<sup>1</sup> as the *Rigveda* tells us, the wheat-coloured proto-Indo-Europeans conquered the previous settlers of darker skin. The civilization and religions that resulted from this conquest gave rise to that which ever since has been known as the Indian religions and civilization, universally acknowledged as being among the most sophisticated of our planet.

In America three cultural and socio-political types of Amerindian peoples have been described: those Mario Sanoja Obediente and Iraida Vargas Arenas<sup>ii</sup> called “horizontal,” those that the same authors called “cacical,”<sup>iii</sup> and the imperial peoples. The “cacical” ones, and to a greater degree the imperial ones, conquered and colonized other Amerindian peoples—these being the earliest instances of colonization known to have taken place in the American continent. Just like in India, the second colonizing wave we have news of was carried out by Indo-European peoples: firstly the Spanish, and then the Portuguese, British, French and Dutch.

Thus, as has occurred throughout the planet, the peoples with vertical political and socio-economic structures conquered those featuring horizontal structures, imposing on them the structures of domination in which the conquerors had learned to live and in terms of which their psyches were structured.

It is well known that in India the next important conquest (the Tibetan conquest of the seventh century CE having been short-lived and limited in territory) was the one carried out by eastbound peoples of Semitic, monotheistic religion—namely Muslim—and in particular the conquest of a great deal of Northern India by Islamized Mongols that gave rise to the Mughal or Mogul empire having Delhi as its capital—as a result of which Islam became an important element of the Indian civilization as we presently know it. Also the European invaders who conquered America had a Semitic monotheistic religion, though in this case it was Christianity rather than Islam. All of these conquerors accepted the Biblical Judaic revelations; on the top of these, the Christians accepted the revelation of Jesus of Nazareth (“Jesus son of Mary” or Isa Ibn Mariam for Muslims), also of Semite extraction;

and on the top of all of these the Muslims accepted the revelation of Prophet Mohammed (another Semite, in this case pertaining to the Arab branch of Semite peoples). And all of them shared the vertical character of the religion in which God, at the top, dictated the norms those below should follow.

Thus both America and India had Indo-European invasions, which gave rise to the vertical civilizations presently prevailing in both regions, as well as invasions by peoples having monotheistic religions of Semitic origin—both of which coincided in the case of the American continent.

In America the liberation movements against the European imperial powers were based on the ideals of the French Revolution, even though some theorists and fighters went beyond these ideals and pursued a more thorough transformation—in Venezuela, including philosopher and teacher Simón Rodríguez, revolutionary Coto Paúl (pioneer in giving the term anarchy a positive connotation)<sup>iv</sup> and General in Chief Manuel Piar; in Uruguay, featuring noted independence leader José Gervasio Artigas. In the USA, Thomas Jefferson went beyond the ideals in question, going so far as to say, “I hope we shall crush ... in its birth the aristocracy of our moneyed corporations, which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength and bid defiance to the laws of our country”—and later on post-independence, anarchist author Henry David Thoreau wrote *Civil Disobedience*,<sup>v</sup> a work that significantly influenced Gandhi.<sup>vi</sup>

The French in India came to control a relatively ample region; the Dutch also came to control relatively ample regions (including those in Bengal); and the Portuguese had many colonies, the sum of which, however, did not amount to a sizable territory. Here we our concern is Britain, insofar as it was the main European colonial power in India, which consolidated into the British Raj. Thus it could be said that the next stage of imperialism and colonialism in both regions was the same with regard to ethnicity and with regard to religion: the WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) of Britain became the main colonial power in India, China and many other regions throughout the planet, and the US became the neo-colonial power in America south of Río Grande: in 1823 President James Monroe proclaimed the homonymous doctrine, which in 1904 was “perfected” or “completed” by Franklin Delano Roosevelt with the corollary bearing his name, so that henceforth it would serve as a pretext for the US to monopolize the resources of the countries south of Río Grande and invade them or intrude into their politics. To this aim, the US set to exercise control over the Latin American masses through the mass media, and proclaiming itself the paladin of democracy it justified whatever actions it took—including the promotion or installation of dictatorships that repressed populations and often went so far as to carry out mass murders of genocides—as attempts to safeguard freedom in face of the threat posed by the totalitarian USSR. Thus it fulfilled Simón Bolívar’s prophesy, according to which, “The United States seem to have been placed by fate in our America to plague it with miseries in the name of freedom.”

Among the main US interventions, here it is worth mentioning the two successive invasions of Nicaragua—that of 1909 and that of 1927—and then, after the Sandinistas overthrew the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza, the training and arming of the Contras; the four successive invasions of Dominican Republic and in particular that of 1965; the 1954 invasion of Guatemala by the US trained and armed forces of Carlos Castillo Armas that overthrew democratically elected President Jacobo Arbenz; the orchestration of the putsch led by Augusto Pinochet that overthrew the democratic government of Salvador Allende; the organization of the military coup by Francisco Morales Bermúdez Cerrutti against the

revolutionary military government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado; the invasion of Grenada that deposed and killed Prime Minister Maurice Bishop; the orchestration of the fierce repression of leftist insurgents in Central America, Colombia and Bolivia; the two successive sackings of Jean-Bertrand Aristide—in 1991 and in 2004—in Haiti; the creation in the 1970s of the Condor Plan, which coordinated repression against suspected insurgents and/or left-wingers by the military dictatorships of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil; etc.

However, in Cuba, on New Year's Day 1959, Fidel Castro's guerrillas overthrew the puppet dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, and the April 1961 invasion of Bahía de Cochinos / Playa Girón by US trained and armed Cubans, sustained by the US Air Force and Navy, was defeated by the forces of Castro's government. Afterwards, the US implemented the embargo against Cuba that continues to cripple the economy of the Caribbean country.

Thus in America resistance against the new stage of imperialism and colonialism was predominantly Marxist. In India, on the other hand, there were a variety of postures, the main ones being the Marxist, the Gandhian, that of the right wing religious, casteistic nationalism, and the Ambedkarian Buddhist (I do not list the Muslim factions because, as everyone knows, they ceased being Indian when secessionism succeeded in giving rise to the separate state of Pakistan).<sup>vii</sup> As it is well known, the murder of Gandhi left Jawaharlal Nehru at the helm of the Congress Party, which under his guidance took on a more modernist and development-oriented outlook, making India a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement that collaborated with the Soviet Union in many fields, and adopted a moderate socialism that, in spite of its incapability to effectively carry out the agrarian reformation and empower the dalits (as so often after land was distributed, higher cast men killed male dalits and raped female ones), managed to implement important social policies, provided the people with free health care, kept the price of medicines extremely low with regard to other countries, etc. And the alliance of Communist Parties that ruled in Kerala and West Bengal tried to reduce social disparities.

Then the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed the US and other leading First World countries to promote neo-liberal<sup>viii</sup> globalization as a means to intensify the exploitation of Third World countries and First World workers, dismantling the gains of the working class, and exacerbating inequality both within the different countries, rich or poor, and between the First World and the Third World. The IMF and the World Bank began imposing neo-liberal policies on the Third World, which as a whole let itself be pulled by the nose to the slaughterhouse, for it was the rulers of Third World countries themselves who implemented the policies that further impoverished their own countries, exacerbated their indebtedness, multiplied inequality and pauperized the masses—paradoxically sowing the seed of future revolutions. Throughout America, Asia and Africa this was done by traditional parties, no matter how leftist they proclaimed themselves: in the countries of South East Asia it was the Marxist ruling parties that handed over their countries to the transnationals; in India, the Congress party changed orientation and implemented market reforms, which were given continuity by the subsequent BJP-led coalition, and afterwards by the present Congress-led coalition that includes the Communist Parties.

In America south of Río Grande, the above made poverty increase to such a degree that the masses turned against the parties they had traditionally voted into power, and in Venezuela, in particular, it led to the “Caracazo:” the spontaneous wave of protests and looting of the 27 February 1989 that, by order of formerly social-democrat and Third World solidarity promoter, president Carlos Andrés Pérez, were violently repressed by the police

and national guard at a cost of thousands of dead (it has been impossible to determine their exact number). It was as a consequence of this that there were two successive 1992 military uprisings against the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez—the first of which was led by the future President, Hugo Chávez Frías—and that Parliament accused Pérez of corruption and replaced him by Ramón J. Velásquez. The next elected president, Rafael Caldera, pardoned Chávez, who then organized an electoral movement, winning the following elections.

In Argentina, after the disastrous government of Carlos Ménem, the opposition won the elections and the new President, Fernando De la Rúa, carried on with the neo-liberal policies of his predecessor, intensifying the crisis, until the confiscation of bank deposits known as “corralito” led to the widespread middle class protests that gave rise to the political and institutional crisis and street protests that led to the episodes of Plaza de Mayo on the 20 and 21 December 2001—which in their turn led to the renunciation of De la Rúa. Five Presidents succeeded each other in less than two weeks, the last one being Eduardo Duhalde, a Peronist (member of the Partido Justicialista) to the left of Carlos Ménem that then was defeated by Kirchner, the new leader of the left wing of the party that was elected President and then succeeded by his wife.

In 2003 in Brazil, Lula (Luis Ignacio da Silva), the leader of the formerly Trotskyist Workers’ Party, won the national elections, replacing the social-democrats turned neo-liberals. Though Lula gave continuity to his predecessors’ market policies and tried to keep business content, his foreign policy, in harmony with those of more leftist Latin American governments, helped the region to switch from following the dictates of Washington to greater independence.

In Bolivia, as a consequence of the mining massacre of Ventilla and the carnage of El Alto in October 2003, President Sánchez de Lozada was forced to renounce, and in the following elections, held in 2005, the leftist leader of the Movimiento al Socialismo, Evo Morales, became the first Amerindian President of his country.

In Ecuador, allegedly due to US pressure, President Alfredo Palacio sacked Finance Minister Rafael Correa, who then accused the government of corruption, igniting the Quito protests of the beginning of August, 2005. After becoming Presidential candidate and winning the first electoral round, in the second ballot or runoff voting of the 26 November, 2006, Correa became the third leftist President in twenty-first century Latin America (the other two being Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales, for as we have seen Lula steered to the political centre, and Kirchner was never so openly leftist).

In Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, won the November 2006 elections in first ballot, becoming the fourth leftist to be elected in a Latin American country in the same period.

The strategies of the new governments of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador were just the same: to convene an Assembly to draw a new Constitution and thus re-found the state. However, as expected, the new, leftist governments faced problems. In Venezuela there was an attempt at *coup d’état* followed by the paralysis of the oil industry, shortages due to the price control implemented by the government, and problems caused by the bureaucracy inherited from former governments. Furthermore, corruption became widespread in the new government, as many adhered to it not because of ideology, but in search of an opportunity to make personal profit, and policies had to be engineered so as to keep the masses content, for otherwise sooner or later the government would end up losing power at the elections. And, in fact, a second attempt at changing the Constitution was defeated at the ballot.

However, in general the new, left wing governments espouse Marxism, which fails to respond to the essential reality of the times: the ecological crisis that threatens to destroy the human species and possibly all life on our planet. Though in its time Marxism arose as a most valuable attempt to put an end to exploitation and achieve the ideal condition called communism, which according to Marx was the “reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) of man with nature,”<sup>ix</sup> it had the flaw of economism—though not so grossly as in the pyramid designed to show that the infrastructure determines the superstructure, for even Engels acknowledged the inadequacy of direct causal explanations, noting that the cultural superstructure in its turn influences the infrastructure and cannot be easily discarded in a rigorous interpretation of the course of human evolution and history, and toward the end of his life denounced economical determinism, noting that the motor of history was “the needs of development of the human spirit.” The core of Marxian economism is the explanation of the succession of economic systems on the basis of merely economic reasons, according to which socialism would have to be implemented when capitalism became incapable of effectively dealing with the levels of wealth it produced (a contradiction that would be revealed by successive economical crises of capitalism, which destroy a great deal of the wealth it creates)—among other things in order to create even greater wealth, which at some point socialism would not be able to manage.<sup>x</sup> This would make the transition to communism possible, so that all would be able to receive on the basis of their needs rather than their contribution. History has refuted this theory, for if capitalism is about to destroy the world through its cancerous production of “wealth,” to replace it in the most developed countries for another system that would create even further “wealth” would destroy this world in a matter of years.

Furthermore, even if the governments in question were truly aware of these things, it would have been impossible for them to design policies that responded to them, for the media continue to make people believe that happiness and fulfilment depend on constantly increasing consumption, on owning private cars, and in general on what the capital wants the masses to believe is the source of happiness. Would anyone attempt to implement policies that truly respond to the ecological crisis that is the mark of our time, he or she would automatically be defeated at the ballot.

The Chávez government developed a successful foreign policy that helped raise the price of oil, producing an effect like the one intended by the Kyoto Treaty, yet subsidized the oil Venezuela sent to poorer countries, by these and other means furthering solidarity between Third World countries—not only in America south of Río Grande, but worldwide. However, the principle of “my enemy’s foes are my friends” became the base of much of the new Venezuelan foreign policy, which began indiscriminately backing the whole of the policies of Muslim integrism, including the two last governments in Iran and that of Hamas in Palestine (praised in official media that deride the Fatah movement), and the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon. Likewise, Chávez defended the 2008 violent repression of protests by the Chinese in Tibet (protests that, according to British intelligence, were orchestrated by the Chinese themselves) in spite of the fact that China is nowadays a Capitalist country, and many Chavez backers began campaigning against the Dalai Lama and accusing him of collaboration with the CIA—even though he is not asking for Tibet’s independence, but for greater autonomy of his region, respect for the Tibetan culture and language, respect for the ecosystem, keeping nuclear garbage outside the Himalayan plateau, and demilitarization of the Himalayan region by all powers. Furthermore, the Dalai Lama proclaimed himself to be a “humanistic socialist” or “humanistic Marxist” (interview in *El Nacional* during his 1992

Caracas visit), and in *Time Magazine* of 11 April 1988 he declared that, “Buddhism can show Marxism how to develop a genuine socialist ideal, ‘not by means of force, but by means of reason, by means of a very gentle training of the mind, by means of the development of altruism’.”

We need political movements to promote policies that respond to the true needs of our time—with regard to which India has a lot to offer. In fact, from Mahatma Gandhi, we would have to adopt the insistence on frugality and on small-scale production carried out by the people itself on the basis of traditional methods, and the rejection of consumption for its own sake. From Dr Bimrao Ambedkar, we should adopt the attempt to put an end to the institution of untouchability, which in spite of having been banned by the 1947 constitution written by Dr Ambedkar himself, until today has proven impossible to eradicate. From the Indian leftists, we should adopt the intention to put an end to casteism (inseparable from untouchability and the misery and indignity inherent in it) and strict adherence to class structures, and achieve socio-economic equality. From the Indian ecologist Vandana Shiva, we must adopt the need to implement truly ecological agriculture (as attempted through the Navdanya program), the study and conservation of biodiversity (as attempted through the Seed University and International College for Sustainable Living), the compromise of women with the ecologist movement (as attempted through Diverse Women for Diversity), and the regeneration of the democratic feeling (as attempted through the Living Democracy Movement).

However, even more important is the contribution that traditional Indian spirituality can make to the solution of ecological crisis and the survival of our species, insofar as the deepest root of the crisis in question, as well as of strict adherence to class structures and all divisions between human beings lies in the divisive perspective of the human mind and perception. In pre-Indo-European times, Shaivism (like the other Eurasian traditions having their axis in Mount Kailash, including Tibetan Bön, Chinese Taoism, Persian Zurvanism, the Egyptian cult of Osiris and the Greek Dionysian mysteries<sup>xi</sup>) achieved the state of Communion that discloses the true, single nature of all animate and inanimate entities that is veiled by the fragmentary perceptual perspective that gives rise to the illusion of inherent multiplicity.

These traditions viewed human spiritual and social evolution as the development of the basic delusion that the Buddha called *avidya*, which comprehended unawareness of the single nature of all entities, the illusion that these entities are self-existent, and unawareness of interconnectedness, and viewed this development as the source of a process of gradual degeneration that destroys the original state of affairs—which I call ecommunism and that involved psychological plenitude, political and economic communism, and integration and harmony with the ecosystem—and produces a succession of ever more degenerate social, political, economical and cultural systems. Finally, the delusion that developed during the time cycle reaches the extreme at which it proves not to work, achieving its *reductio ad absurdum* and being surpassed together with the social, political, economic, spiritual and cultural systems that developed interdependently with it, so that psychological plenitude and ecommunism are restored—the latter in a new way, for in my view technology, which as a result of the ensuing revolution of the human psyche (and just as Marcuse envisaged it<sup>xii</sup>) becomes integrated with the ecosystem, is an element of the new way of living.

In the initial Era of Perfection, Age of Truth or Golden Age, the Communion state in which the true, single nature of all entities was realized nonconceptually and nondually, characterized by undividedness and absolute plenitude and perfection, alternated with an

incipient manifestation of the delusion the Buddha called *avidya*. With the passing of time, it became gradually more difficult to achieve Communion, so that only a few practitioners of the ancient Wisdom traditions could gain access to it, and in the post-Communion state delusion became progressively more powerful, giving rise to unhappy consciousness and negative environmental and social consequences, which increased with the passing of time. Now that we have entered the final stage of the of the Age of Darkness or *Kaliyuga*, and hence of the cycle, delusion and its negative effects have reached their paroxysm: the technologically enhanced project of exploitation of humankind and the ecosystem has produced an ecological crisis in the ecosphere, society and the individual, which proves that it was based on a delusory perception and hence constitutes the *reductio ad absurdum* of this delusory perception. Thus humankind has reached the threshold level at which it can surpass the delusion that developed during the cycle, and if this occurs in time to prevent self-destruction (and personally I am convinced final destruction will not occur at the end of this cycle), a new cycle will begin with a new Age of Perfection, Age of Truth or Golden Age—or else we will enter the roughly analogous Millennium of plenitude and perfection announced in the *Tantra Kalachakra* of *Vajrayana* Buddhism and in analogous traditions of Christianity, the Ismailian tradition of Islam<sup>xiii</sup> and so on. As we have seen, this new age will constitute the restoration of ecommunism.

The degenerative view of spiritual and social evolution seems to our contemporaries a romantic myth. However, according to Lenski's statistics in *Human Societies*<sup>xiv</sup>—based on the data in Murdock's *Ethnographic Atlas*—only 2% of contemporary hunter-gatherer societies have a class system, while private ownership of land is completely absent in 89% of them (and only 'rare' in the other 11%).<sup>xv</sup> Recent discoveries of paleopathology show that prior to 4,000 BC (or to 12,000 BC in the only sites, located in the Nile valley, which are an exception to this rule) there was no violence between human beings.<sup>xvi</sup> Likewise, research by ethnoecologists has shown that in the Amazon, where the topsoil is extremely poor, regions inhabited for a longer time exhibit a higher degree of biodiversity than those that have been inhabited for shorter time or that are as yet uninhabited<sup>xvii</sup>—which seems to show that the intuitive wisdom of the aborigines was such that their interventions on the environment optimized ecological relations. On the contrary, as T. Dale and V. G. Carter have shown,<sup>xviii</sup> most civilizations destroyed themselves by irrationally preying on their environment, and, in the case of Western civilization, Modernity developed what Gregory Bateson called a "conscious purpose against nature,"<sup>xix</sup> which, as so many of the most upright and regardful scientists on the planet have warned, will very likely put an end to life on our planet, or at least disrupt human society—not unlikely in the current century. (The data supporting this degenerative view are truly overwhelming; for a review, cf. the works cited in the note.<sup>xx</sup>)

The project of Modernity is a product of the extreme delusion inherent in present day normality, involving the severe perceptual fragmentation produced by the exaggeration of what *Gestalt* theory calls figure-ground minds and of understanding exclusively in terms of digital secondary process,<sup>xxi</sup> which prevents overall appreciation of the indivisibility of the continuum that is the universe and of the interdependent working of the parts we single out in it—and delusion is by definition the opposite of sanity and mental health. In fact, the figures we single out in the sensory continuum appear to us as being inherently isolated from the ground, for consciousness is unaware of the indivisibility of the continuum of the territory and of the interdependence, not only of the singled out figure and the rest of the continuum, but of all *potential* figures among themselves. The result is the lack of overall

understanding of the indivisible, analogy continuum and network of interdependences that is the universe—which, according to the *Udaana* (third book of the *Khuddaka Nikaya* in the Pali Canon, basis of the Hinayana), the Mahayana Sutras, the philosophy of Nagarjuna (based on the *Prajñaparamitasutras* of the Second Dharmachakra) and other Buddhist sources and systems, is a central aspect of the human delusion called *avidya*. K. Venkata Ramanan<sup>xxii</sup> paraphrases the explanation in the *Prajñaparamitashastra*, which the Chinese attribute to Nagarjuna, of this essential aspect of delusion:

We select from out of the presented only the aspects of our interest and neglect the rest; to the rest that is neglected we become first indifferent and then blind; in our blindness, we claim completeness for the aspects we have selected. We seize them as absolute, we cling to them as complete truth... While the intellectual analysis of the presented content into its different aspects is conducive to and necessary for a comprehensive understanding, analysis is miscarried if the fragmentary is mistaken for the complete, the relative is mistaken for the absolute.

In the *Udaana*, Shakyamuni Buddha illustrated this aspect of the basic human delusion by the story of six blind men and an elephant, according to which the one who held the elephant's head asserted the object to be like a pot, the one who held the ear said it was like a winnowing fan, and so on:<sup>xxiii</sup> each of them held so firmly to his partial view, taking it to be the exact, absolute view of totality, that they failed to come to an agreement as to the nature of the object before them. The *Tathagatagarbhasutra* of the Third Dharmachakra tells the same story, as follows:<sup>xxiv</sup>

The King assembled many blind men and, [placing them before] an elephant, commanded, "Describe [this object's] particular characteristics." Those among them who felt the elephant's nose said that [the object] resembled an iron hook. Those who felt the eyes said that [it] resembled bowls. Those who felt the ears said [it] resembled winnowing baskets. Those who felt the back said it resembled a sedan chair, and those who felt the tail said it resembled a string. Indeed, though [their respective descriptions responded to the parts of the] elephant [they touched], they were lacking in overall understanding...

In a modified version of this story popularized by Sufi poets in Islamic countries (in Sana'i's *Hadiqah* the men were blind, but in Rumi's *Mathnavi* they were in the dark), each of the men grasped a different part of the pachyderm, reaching a diverse conclusion as to what the animal was: the one who took hold of its trunk said it was a hose; the one who seized its ear thought it was a fan; the one who put his hand on its back decided it was a throne; and the one who clasped its leg concluded it was a pillar. We could add that the one who grabbed its tail threw it away in terror, believing it to be a snake.

The result of the perception of parts of the whole as intrinsically isolated essents and the incapacity of consciousness to apprehend interconnections, of the inverted meaning the contents of digital secondary process have in the analogy code of primary process,<sup>xxv</sup> and in general of the basic human delusion called *avidya*, is a lack of fit between the aims behind our actions and the results these produce. In this regard I wrote elsewhere:<sup>xxvi</sup>

A delusion is a distorted perception of reality. Someone who, being deluded in regard to the direction of cardinal points, tries to go south, at a given moment could as well discover she or he is going north. As we have seen, this happens all the time in our daily



lives, as so often our attempts to get pleasure result in pain, the actions whereby we intend to get happiness give rise to unhappiness, what we do achieve security produces insecurity, and so on and on. In fact, the essential human delusion called *avidya* gives rise to an inverted dynamics that often causes us to achieve with our actions the very opposite of what we set out to accomplish—which is what a popular twentieth century British-born author called “law of inverted effect” or “reverse law”.<sup>xxvii</sup> The great Dzogchen Master Vimalamitra provided us with an excellent example of this law in the *There Sections of the Letters of the Five Spaces*, where he noted that all the happiness of *samsara*, even if it momentarily appears as such, is in reality only suffering, maturing in the same way as the effects of eating an appetizing yet poisonous fruit:<sup>xxviii</sup> again and again the appetizing aspect of the fruits of *samsara* beguile us into gobbling them, yet we fail to learn from the ensuing stomach aches. In *The Precious Vase: Instructions on the Base of Santi Maha Samgha*, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu explains the examples in terms of the five senses with which the *mahasiddha* Sarahapada illustrated this law.<sup>xxix</sup>

“Not knowing what to accept and what to reject, even though we crave happiness we obtain only sorrow, like a moth that, attracted by a flame dives into it and is burnt alive; or like a bee that, due to its attachment to nectar, sucks a flower and cannot disengage from it, dying trapped inside; or like a deer killed by hunters while it listens to the sound of the flute; like fish that, attached to the taste of the food on the fisherman’s hook, die on the hot sand; like an elephant that, craving contact with something cool, goes into a muddy pool and dies because it cannot get out. In fact the *Treasury of the Dohas (Do ha mdzod)* says:

“Observe the deeds of the fish, the moth, the elephant, the bee and the deer, [each of which brings about its own suffering through attachment to objects of one of the five senses]! [...]”

Each society has its conventions, which contradict those of many other societies and which are as arbitrary as the latter: while the Arabs see burping after partaking of a meal at someone else’s home as a sign of politeness showing one is satisfied, European convention would see the same behaviour as a scandalous breach of etiquette. However, the problem does not lie in the difference of conventions, but in the fact that both the Arab and the European, just as all other peoples, mistaking convention (Greek *nomos*) for nature (Greek *physis*), see their own social rules as absolute, universal standards. Far worse, religiously sanctioned ideologies have engendered terrible forms of repression of children, women and all kinds of human beings. Likewise, insofar as the followers of each theistic religion take their own faith to be divinely sanctioned, and insofar as the followers of each ideology take their own doctrine to be the only true and/or just one, religious and ideological divergences have for millennia given rise to sheer insane behaviour like wars, massacres, crucifixions, the Inquisition with its tortures and stake, lynching, etc. However, in the last centuries things have turned for the worst, for as we have seen, the currently prevailing ideology, which is that of progress and of science as the bearer of truth, has given rise to courses of behaviour that are likely to destroy human society and even put an end to human life on this planet in the course of the present century and which as such are the most insane ever taken by our species.

Thus we can but agree with seventeenth century French thinker Blaise Pascal,<sup>xxx</sup> who compared the state of mind of normal individuals to a psychological disorder, and with ex-Frankfurt philosopher, social psychologist and New Age forerunner Erich Fromm, who gave to understand that our society as a whole is way far from sanity.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Just as there is a *folie à deux* there is a *folie à millions*. The fact that millions of people share the same vices does not make these vices virtues, the fact that they share so many errors does not make the errors to be truths, and the fact that millions of people share the same form of mental pathology does not make these people sane.

Antipsychiatry turned commonplace the idea that present day normality is a radical form of insanity, for it consists in being well adapted to an extremely deranged society, and as such implies becoming extremely deranged. In its turn, society is deranged because its members are affected by an extreme instance of the basic human delusion called *avidya*, which has led to common, clearly insane cultural views and conventions. Roughly twelve centuries before Fromm, Buddhist Master and philosopher Chandrakirti<sup>xxxii</sup> related the fable of a king that consulted a famous astrologer, who predicted that a rainfall of “maddening water” would pollute the reservoirs in his kingdom, as a consequence of which all who drank from them would be driven insane. Hence the king warned his ministers and subjects to prepare a protected supply of water and avoid drinking the deranging water. However, the subjects, being less wealthy, exhausted their reserves more rapidly, and soon had to drink contaminated water. Since the king and the ministers behaved quite differently from the subjects who had drunk the maddening water, the latter concluded that the former had become insane. When the ministers used up their reserves, they also had to drink the deranging water—upon which the rest of the subjects thought the ministers had become normal, and all agreed the only insane man was the king. Thus in order to keep his kingdom and avoid being impeached and put into an asylum, the king had no option but to drink the polluted water.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

The modern exacerbation of the essential human delusion, by carrying to its logical extreme our sensation of being entities inherently separate and independent from the rest of nature, and in general our fragmentary perception of the universe as though it were the sum of intrinsically separate, self-existent and unconnected entities, has made us worse than the men with the elephant. The illusion of omnipotence of human reason and the distrust of Nature’s holistic, non-conceptual Wisdom caused us to feel that, for our earthly existence to be comfortable and pleasant, we had to control and dominate Nature; that the latter was imperfect and that we had to impose on it the “perfect order” we had imagined—which led us to develop and implement the technological project aimed at destroying the parts of the world that annoyed us and appropriating those that pleased us, which has gravely impaired the functionality of the worldwide ecosystem of which we are parts and on which our survival as a species depends. A popular Western author illustrated this by saying that our incapacity to grasp the unity of the coin of life led us to develop and apply powerful corrosives in order to destroy the side that we deemed undesirable—death, illness, pain, troubles, etc.—and to protect the side we considered desirable—life, health, pleasure, comfort, etc. Those corrosives, by boring a hole through the coin, now are on the verge of destroying the side we were intent on preserving.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

In order to illustrate the narrow and fragmentary state of consciousness inherent to *avidya* that a tradition associated with the *Kalachakra Tantra* calls “small space-time-knowledge,”<sup>xxxv</sup> the Buddha Shakyamuni used the example of a frog that, having been confined throughout its life to the bottom of a well, thought the sky was a small blue circle. This is the type of consciousness illustrated by the famous adage of the tree blocking the view of the forest, concerning which Gregory Bateson said that, when it perceives an arc, it fails to realize that it is part of a circuit. Consequently, when an arc annoys us, we aim at it

our powerful technological weapons, destroying the circuit of which they are a part; setting fire to the tree in front of us, we burn the forest in which we stand, bringing about our own destruction. In other of my works, I explained this in terms of the structure of the Four Noble Truths:<sup>xxxvi</sup>

(1) The current ecological crisis is so grave that, if everything goes on as it is, human society will be disrupted and life may even come to disappear from the planet, possibly within the current century. Meanwhile, natural disasters will proliferate, our existence will become ever more miserable, and an increasing number of human beings will be incapable of adapting to the social and biological environment, which will give rise to extremely high levels of stress, neurosis and psychosis, addiction to the most harmful drugs, serious illnesses and suicides.

(2) There is a primary cause of the ecological crisis, which is the fragmentation of human perception and extreme selfishness inherent in fully developed *avidya*. If we feel and believe ourselves to be inherently separate from the rest of the human species, sooner or after we will give rise to the religious, social, economic, racial and ideological divisions, within societies as well as between different human groups, which are at the root of injustices and conflicts. If we are unaware of ecological interdependence and feel inherently separate from the rest of the ecosystem, we are likely to wish to destroy the aspects of nature that disturb us and to appropriate those we wrongly believe will endow us with comfort, pleasure and security—giving rise to the technological project that has destroyed the systems on which life depends.

(3) There is a solution to the ecological crisis, which lies in the eradication of its primary cause—the basic human delusion called *avidya*—and of its secondary causes—the technological project of domination and exploitation of nature and of other human beings, and the severe political, economic and social inequality.

(4) The Buddhist Path can eradicate the causes of ecological crisis and restore an era of communitarian, harmonious social organization based on the systemic wisdom that frees us from the urge to obtain ever more manipulative knowledge, and allows us to use the knowledge we already possess in ways that are beneficial to the biosphere as a whole, and to all beings without distinctions.

All of this shows that fully developed *avidya*, as a delusion, is not unlike the ones psychiatrists describe as a result of the observation of their psychotic patients—the main difference between the one and the others being that unanimous consensus causes normal, socially sanctioned delusion to go unnoticed. Our survival depends on the eradication of this delusion, which only now, because of its *reductio ad absurdum*, has become possible for our species as a whole. To this aim we need the Indian wisdom traditions, which are among the most effective means to uproot *avidya*—an uprooting that must necessarily be a central element the total transformation of the individual, society, politics and culture that would extend the life of our species and allow it to achieve a new age characterized by fulfilment, plenitude and harmony.

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<sup>i</sup> This is the most likely date to contemporary historians; it contradicts Brahmanic tradition, which claims the Indo-Europeans were originary of the Himalayas rather than having been invaders from the Caucasus, and contradicts older historians that date the Samhita collection of Vedas as far older than that (early Indian historians used to posit 6,000 through 3,000 BCE; Tilak and Jacobi, 4,500 BCE; Radhakrishnan, 1,500 BCE).

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- <sup>ii</sup> Sanoja Obediente, Mario & Vargas Arenas, Iraida (1987): *La sociedad cacical del valle de Quíbor* (Estado Lara, Venezuela). In: Drennan, Robert D. & Uribe, Carlos A. (Eds.) *Chieftoms in the Americas*, Pp. 201-212. Lanham: University Press of America.
- Sanoja Obediente, Mario & Vargas Arenas, Iraida (1999): *Orígenes de Venezuela: Regiones neohistóricas aborígenes hasta 1500 d. C.* Caracas: Fundación Comisión Presidencial V Centenario de Venezuela.
- <sup>iii</sup> From the word “cacique,” meaning “Amerindian chief.”
- <sup>iv</sup> Rama, Carlos M. & Cappelletti, Angel J. (Ed. and notes); Cappelletti, Angel J. (foreword and y chronology); (1990). *El anarquismo en América Latina*. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho.
- <sup>v</sup> Internet: <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=71>
- <sup>vi</sup> Among his abolitionist works some of the most important ones are:  
 (1789) *An Address to the Public* (Internet: [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/An\\_Address\\_to\\_the\\_Public](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/An_Address_to_the_Public))  
 (1789) *A Plan for Improving the Condition of the Free Blacks* (Internet: [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/A\\_Plan\\_for\\_Improving\\_the\\_Condition\\_of\\_the\\_Free\\_Blacks](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/A_Plan_for_Improving_the_Condition_of_the_Free_Blacks))  
 (1790) Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim on the Slave Trade (Internet: [http://books.google.co.ve/books?id=iveyYA\\_jL\\_sC&pg=PA891&lpg=PA891&dq=Sidi+Mehemet+Ibrahim+on+the+Slave+Trade&source=web&ots=m2zoodxyGJ&sig=gkr7cKRZSCiApytQQxM5Jt-fH50&hl=es#PPR5.M1](http://books.google.co.ve/books?id=iveyYA_jL_sC&pg=PA891&lpg=PA891&dq=Sidi+Mehemet+Ibrahim+on+the+Slave+Trade&source=web&ots=m2zoodxyGJ&sig=gkr7cKRZSCiApytQQxM5Jt-fH50&hl=es#PPR5.M1)).
- In 1790, the Quakers from New York and Pennsylvania presented their demand for abolition, which was backed by the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society and its president, who was no other than Benjamin Franklin.
- <sup>vii</sup> See Capriles, Elías (2007). Gandhi, Ambedkar y el nacionalismo religioso casteísta: Paradigmas de la India ante la mundialización y el belicismo contemporáneos. Internet: <http://www.webdelprofesor.ula.ve/humanidades/elicap/>
- <sup>viii</sup> In the compound term “neo-liberal,” “liberal” has the same meaning it as in the compound term “classical liberalism,” which refers to the liberalism of Adam Smith and his followers, consisting in the promotion of economic laissez-faire, as different from the sense the term is given in the US, where it refers to those promoting socially-oriented and democratic policies and state intervention in the economy. However, the historian of economy Paul Bairoch has shown that the First World countries that promote economic laissez faire in the Third World have consistently boosted their own economies through State intervention.
- <sup>ix</sup> Marx, Karl (1959). *El Capital*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- <sup>x</sup> Capriles, E. (1994). *Individuo, sociedad, ecosistema: Ensayos sobre filosofía, política y mística (Individual, Society, Ecosystem: Essays on Philosophy, Politics and Mysticism)*. Mérida, Venezuela: Consejo de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Los Andes.
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- <sup>xi</sup> Namkhai Norbu (1982/2004). *The Necklace of Zi: On the History and Culture of Tibet*. Arcidosso, GR, Italy: Shang Shung Edizioni. (Original Ed. Dalai Lama Headquarters.)
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- <sup>xii</sup> Marcuse, Herbert (1972). *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, p. 61. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Parain, B. (Ed.) (1972). *Historia de la Filosofía Siglo XXI Editores: Del mundo romano al Islam medieval*, p. 281. Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores. (Original French Ed. 1969.)
- <sup>xiv</sup> Lenski, G.; Lenski, J., & Nolan, P. (1978). *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. (1st Ed. 1970.)
- <sup>xv</sup> Taylor, S. (2005). *The Fall: The Evidence for a Golden Age, 6,000 Years of Insanity, and the Dawning of a New Era*. Winchester, UK / New York, NY: The Bothy, John Hunt Publishing LTD., O Books.
- <sup>xvi</sup> In fact, Lochouarn (1993. De quoi mouraient les hommes primitifs [Causes of Death among Primitive Men]. Paris: *Sciences et Avenir*, No. 553, March 1993, 44-7) showed how, on the basis of the study of a very large quantity of European and North-African human fossils from the Paleolithic and the Neolithic, paleopathology has established that in those eras human beings did not die from traumatism caused by other human beings, and that, on the contrary, whenever possible, wounds and traumatism caused by the attack of animals or by accidents were cured with the help of other individuals. In the following years the research done by paleopathology encompassed the whole world, having as its object a very high number of ancient corpses; we find a wide summary of this research in van der Dennen (1995. *The Origin of War: The Evolution of a Male-Coalitional Reproductive Strategy*. Groningen, NL: Origin Press). Likewise, there are summaries of the subsequent results of this research in DeMeo (1998. *Sahasia*. Ashland, OR: Natural Energy Works) and Taylor (*op. cit.*).
- <sup>xvii</sup> Descola, P. (1996). Les cosmologies des indiens d'Amazonie. Comme pour leurs frères du nord, la nature est une construction sociale. (The Cosmologies of Amazonian Indians: As is the Case with their Brothers to the North, Nature is a Social Construction). Paris: *La Recherche*, 292, November 1996, 62-7.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Dale, T. & Carter, V. G. (1955). *Topsoil and Civilization*. Oklahoma, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
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- <sup>xx</sup> Taylor (*op. cit.*); Capriles (2007b).
- <sup>xxi</sup> The process in 1895 Freud called secondary is digital and based on the computations of the left cerebral hemisphere, whereas the code of the process he called primary is analogue and based on the computations of the right hemisphere. Cf. Freud, S. (1974). *Proyecto de una psicología para neurólogos*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial. (Original German Ed. 1895.) (*Project for a Scientific Psychology*, reprinted in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. I, 1886-1899, at 295.)
- <sup>xxii</sup> Ventaka Ramanan, K. (1966). *Nagarjuna's Philosophy*, pp. 107-108. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, for the Harvard-Yenching Institute.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Buddha Shakyamuni (ed. P. Steinthal) (1885, 1982). *Udaana*, pp. 66-68. London: The Pali Text Society. (This is the third text of the *Khuddaka-nikaaya* of the *Sutta-pi.taka*.)  
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- <sup>xxiv</sup> Dudjom Rinpoche (1991). *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. I, p. 295 (trans.: G. Dorje & M. Kapstein). Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications. vol. I, p. 295
- <sup>xxv</sup> Cf. Capriles, E. (1994, 2000b, 2003, 2007b), and Capriles, E. (2007d). "From Primal to Postmodern Ecommunism." In Kumar, Corinne (Ed.) (2007) *Asking, we Walk* (2 vols.) Bangalore, India: Streelekha Publications.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Capriles, E. (2003).
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Watts, A. (1959). *The Wisdom of Insecurity*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Namkhai Norbu (1999/2001). *The Precious Vase: Instructions on the Base of Santi Maha Sangha*, p. 41. Arcidosso, GR, Italy: Shang-Shung Edizioni. The quotation is from Vimalamitra (terma by Jamyang Khyentse [1820-1892]), *kLong lnga'i yi ge dum bu gsum pa* (*Man ngag thams cad kyi rgyal po klong lnga'i yi ge dum bu gsum pa*), p. 6, 6.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Namkhai Norbu (1999/2001), p. 44.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Pascal, B. (1962). *Pensées*. Paris: Le Livre de Poche. (Posthumous edition, 1669.)
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- <sup>xxxii</sup> The original Buddhist story was told in Chandrakirti's *Bodhisattvayogacharyachaturshatakātika* (Tib., *dbu ma bzhi brgya pa'i 'grel pa*, or *byang chub sems dpa'i rnal 'byor spyod pa gzhi brgya pa'i rgya cher 'grel pa*): a Commentary to Aryadeva's *Chatuhishataka* (Tib., *bzhi brgya pa*).
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Trungpa, C. (1976). *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation*. Berkeley, CA: Shambhala.
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- <sup>xxxiv</sup> This example was used by Alan Watts, from whom I have often borrowed it. Unfortunately I do not remember in which of Watts' books it was used.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Tarthang Tulku (1977). *Time, Space and Knowledge: A New Vision of Reality*. Emeryville, CA: Dharma Publishing.
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