

WORKSHOP ON INEQUALITY, POVERTY AND LAND CRISIS

Outline of Christian COMELIAU's intervention

This intervention is conceived as an effort to identify the links between the dominant system of world development, on the one hand, and the global issues of inequality, poverty and land crisis on the other.

1 - Development and globalisation: the dominant world system and its consequences.

- *Development* must be seen here in its most general meaning of “social progress”, for all societies (including the richest). As a consequence, there is a need for a global approach, focusing in priority on the choices of development objectives (and therefore not only on economic growth).
- The existing *world system* should be analysed as a source of opportunities and constraints for development, in economic terms but also in terms of social relations, ecological requirements, and more generally in terms of culture (as a way of thinking and behaviour). The recent process of “globalisation” appears as a re-inforcement of these opportunities and constraints. The characteristics of the present world system are especially the following : economism, productivism, systematic predominance of the market criteria. The practical results, not surprisingly, are: ignorance of basic needs, growing inequality, social and ecological costs, absence of democracy, alienation. Many examples of those results can be found in the field of land issues: priority of exports over food, jobless growth, endless accumulation, waste of lands and natural resources such as water and forests.
- A general *critique* of this world development perspective: this system becomes more and more unacceptable (for ethical and political reasons) and unsustainable (for economic, social and ecological reasons). Therefore there is a need for a profound rethinking of the development process, of the world system, of the globalisation process, and of their interrelations.

2 - Gandhism as an alternative approach

The philosophy of Gandhi may be a source of inspiration for a new and more satisfactory approach of development, if there is an effort to re-think the links between the principles of

this philosophy and their practical translations in facing the main contemporary development issues.

A first step could consist of comparing the main characteristics of the present world system in terms of development strategies, and those of the Gandhian philosophy. They are diametrically opposed, as appears in the table below :

WORLD SYSTEM	GANDHIAN SOCIETY
An economy-oriented society	A holist society
Means rather than objectives	Objectives rather than means
Efficiency, even if violent	Humanity, non violence
Micro and macro approach	Self-centered micro approach
Maximisation of growth	Quality of progress
Maximisation of exchange	Self-reliance
Competition	Solidarity
Profit maximisation	Real needs
Solvent demand	Social needs
Money flows regulation	Real needs
Private ownership	No possession
Technology and mechanisation	Human labour employment
Urbanisation	Local communities, villages

3 - Proposals for the future

No precise proposals (because each collectivity is supposed to make its own choices), only principles.

Need for a systematic research of alternatives, on the basis of the table above and of the main development issues of our world; some examples.

A practical proposal for Ekta-Parishad and his network : on the basis of the current experience of the association, it would be useful to organise a permanent and systematic exchange of views among experts, policymakers and universities (mainly by exchange of E-mails, or through the Ekta-Parishad newsletter, and periodically by organising some specific workshops). The goal would be to identify the political, intellectual and technical requirements for solving the main policy issues of the development process, especially in inequality, poverty, and land crisis.