

# Transcensory Education: Expanding our Understanding of Intelligence

Dialogue between Doctors Raquel Ríos and Shiv D. Talwar

**Dr. Shiv Talwar** retired early from his career of teaching Civil Engineering to follow up on his early dream of doing “something” so that the identity savagery the like of which he experienced in India in 1947 becomes a thing of the past. Consequently, he helped initiate Spiritual Heritage Education Network Inc. (SHEN, [www.spiritualeducation.org](http://www.spiritualeducation.org)). Shiv received his engineering education in India, United States and Canada. His childhood education in spirituality and human ethics began on regular early morning walks with his parents and continued formally with some excellent teachers in scheduled courses at school. This background enriched his life and shaped his values, still continues to do so and enabled him later to seek the guidance of his spiritual mentor Late Swami Vishwatma Bawra for advanced direction. Shiv can be reached at [shivtalwar@spiritualeducation.org](mailto:shivtalwar@spiritualeducation.org)

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The purpose of this public dialogue is to promote the use of dialogue as a tool to build relationships across race, class, religion and gender for the purpose of collaboration for social justice and change. The dialogue is an interactive experience in which participants from diverse backgrounds share personal lived experiences, insights and thoughts related to a reading selection and consequent thought provoking questions designed by the participants themselves.

## Reading Selections:

The Seven Dimensions of Spiritual Intelligence: An Ecumenical, Grounded Theory, by Yosi Amram, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Presented at the 115<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Psychological Association, 2007

Integrated Intelligence: The Future of Intelligence, by Marcus Anthony, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia, Journal of Futures Studies, November 2003, 8(2): 39-54

Rios: First of all, let me publicly thank you, Dr. Talwar for participating in this dialogue. My first question to you is regarding the many terms used to describe an expanded understanding of knowledge to include a higher consciousness that transcends the human condition. Amongst

them are: spiritual intelligence/education, transpersonal consciousness, transcensory education, and existential intelligence. Which term do you feel most comfortable with and why? How might the terminology be an important factor in the research and development of this body of knowledge?

My answer to your question is linked intimately to the thrust of my underlying thoughts, which I would prefer to present before addressing the question directly.

Who and what is a human being and what is her/his nature? Where do we come from and what is our ultimate destination? What is our relationship with others? What is the purpose of our being? Why do we want to do good and avoid evil? What is good? What is evil? Humanity has been seeking coherent answers to such questions from times immemorial.

According to the deepest insights of prophets, sages and seers the world over, everyone and everything in the universe in which we exist are a manifestation and an unfolding of an ultimate reality. This reality is different from anything that exists in the universe on one hand, and everything that exists is nothing but this reality on the other. Everything, all entities, all beings, all emotions and all ideas in the universe can be explained and understood, without recourse to any other entity, in terms of this ultimate reality. At the same time, there is nothing, no entity, no being, no emotion and no idea in the universe in terms of which the ultimate reality can be explained or understood.

But, we humans are intellectual beings and we need to understand. Understanding and explanations operate at different planes varying all the way from the most apparent and the simplest to that of the deepest insights into reality. Our understanding becomes our reality until we transcend it and reach a deeper comprehension. The process can go on as long as one keeps on learning through the focused application of one's intellect in the initial stages and transcending in the later. This final understanding is called the ultimate as compared to the first understanding closest to the most apparent which may be called the immediate. Thus, there is a whole world of understandings between the immediate and the ultimate.

The stepwise journey from the immediate to the ultimate is the bottom up approach. This is the approach of science. This is also the approach of most spiritual seekers who can only climb one rung of the ladder at a time. On the contrary, making one quantum leap from the immediate to the ultimate and then explaining the immediate from this vantage is the top down approach which is available only to the select few. Let us look at how this works. The reality of the universe is undeniable. Something must come out of something. Nothing can come out of nothing. The universe comes out of its ultimate cause. Just like the reality of the universe is undeniable, the reality of its underlying principle is undeniable as well.

Since all "things insentient" and all "sentient beings" in the universe exist through an unfolding of the One ultimate reality. The process of manifestation begins with its appearance as two inseparable principles: one of consciousness that animates and one of a primordial nature that underlies the physical bodies of all sentient and insentient beings. This One ultimate reality is also referred to as the Absolute Being in order to differentiate it from us

relative beings.

Since all beings, sentient and insentient, are manifestations of the One ultimate reality or Absolute Being, we all “sentient” and “insentient” alike share the two principles of consciousness and primordial nature. Thus, we are ultimately all one, both at the levels of our consciousness and our physical being, although at the relative level, our apparent reality is that of separate individuals.

We were told that we were created by God. What is this ultimate reality and what is its’ manifestation? The concept of God is an immediate level explanation that societies use to explain our existence. God is a personal being that creates us and the world. God creates us from nothing. There is no material used for his creation. We may understand that He creates us from Himself, in his own image.

The concept of an ultimate reality on the other hand is the deepest insight of all our prophets, sages and seers. These insights are written in our scriptures. But human scriptures are written so that they are meaningful to all of us including those who can only understand the immediate and the apparent. Human scriptures present the whole range of spiritual insights, from the immediate to the ultimate, experienced by our prophets, sages and seers on their personal spiritual journeys and recorded for our guidance.

In this context, language uses two mutually opposing terms: matter and spirit. Matter is characterized by direct sense perception through the cognitive senses, while spirit can only be perceived indirectly through the eye of the intellect. Matter is gross and apparent, while spirit is the subtle essence hidden behind the apparent. Understanding of the subtle essence is spiritual understanding. Its nature depends upon how deep below the apparent one is able to dive. It may be said that all spiritual discernment/understanding is transcensory in nature.

Direct human experience is related to the world of sense perception, i.e., to the material world. Our language describes our experience and therefore it too is limited to the material world. We define ourselves through our experience, our understanding, and our worldview, which define our personal identity. In that sense, all spiritual understanding/education is transpersonal.

As you said, there are many terms used to describe an understanding or consciousness that transcends human condition. Let us first consider the term existential education. Although the intended understanding/education is related with our existence, I do not think it is correct to call it existential education because the term is not specific enough in its definition of the subject matter to be taught, which in my perspective, is specifically related with the journey of the spirit. Between these two, the term which I prefer to use is spiritual because it reflects the nature of the intention more specifically than existential education.

The terms transcensory and transpersonal reflect the transcendental nature of the proposed education: we need to progressively transcend the realm of our senses and sensory experience on our journey from the immediate and most apparent to the ultimate. These terms are procedural rather than definitional in nature. Why not call a thing by a name that describes what it is rather than that which describes how to get it? I prefer to use the definitional term of

spiritual education.

We already are familiar with the terms spirit or spirituality. Why coin new terms? One reason may be the historical burden the term spirit carries because of its close association with faith or religion. There is so much confusion between core spirituality (which may be called quintessential religion) and popular religion (commonly understood by its doctrine, dogma and ritual) that many people refer to popular religion as spirituality.

Religion for its popular appeal relates with the most apparent and immediate form of spiritual understanding to be grasped by the common person on the street. Education in core spirituality on the other hand aims at fulfilling the “promise” of religion by deepening the understanding and transform consciousness to see the underlying oneness of all creation.

Terminology is an important factor in the research and development of the intended body of knowledge. I do not recommend expedience as the deciding factor. In research and development, it is important to be rigorous, precise and academically honest -- otherwise standards are easily compromised.

The intended body of knowledge is already present in the world of scriptural literature. We do not need to reinvent it. What we do need to do is learn how to highlight core spirituality in meaningful ways to take it deep into our consciousness. To be meaningful in today’s context, we must interpret it didactically with affirmations from secular disciplines. In addition to concepts, we need to emphasize theory and practice of transcendental disciplines for transforming human consciousness to align with these concepts.

Talwar: What do you understand by the terms spirituality, spiritual development and spiritual education in a pluralistic setting and what in your opinion should be the purpose and goals of such education?

In search of a greater understanding of social justice and spiritual awareness, I found you and your organization. My journey began in my mind, traveled through to my heart and settled in meditation for some time before the door opened to deeper knowledge. This is occurring now with you, your network affiliates and the experience of non-coincidental events that have appeared on my map once it was started. All of this, my lived experience as I breathe it, highlights my fundamental understanding of spirituality and spiritual education. I define it as the overt, explicit and deliberate willingness to engage in an ethereal process that leads us closer to truth, focused and sustained action for inner peace and community building. You rightly state that “there is a whole world of understandings between the immediate and the ultimate,” and I often wonder where I now stand in that spectrum. When did I first begin to gain insight into consciousness? Where will the journey lead? What is the ultimate for me and how will I experience it? It is my belief that while the ultimate is a universal Oneness, each of us has a unique experience of it and an equally unique role within it. This is curiosity, as I see it. This is motivation, engagement with and for life. These things, too, are spirituality and spiritual development and all of what education is meant to be. What is education without this intrinsic desire for knowledge and infinite curiosity for the beyond?

Perhaps this is why I have been using the term transcensory education in my work because as you so rightly note, transcensory and transpersonal education are procedural rather than definitional in nature. Why not call a thing by a name that describes what it is rather than that which describes how to get it? I imagine that each of us will gravitate towards the term that currently defines our own inner understanding, our particular space in time. I am very much interested in the process that I am engaging in, the “how” so to speak so that as I live it and believe it and see it and experience the endless bounty within it, I can share it with others, teach it, and continuously engage in the process of educating for change.

In the workbook, *Teaching to Transcend: A New Life Skills Workbook for Organic Teaching* (Rios, 2009), I posit that transcensory education is the practice of reaching beyond the traditional human experience limited to the five senses in order to maximize human potential. Implicit in transcensory education is the notion that humans are at a critical point in their evolution and that we have the power to exist above and independent of the material plane. The role of the teacher, therefore, expands into new territory. Teachers become critical agents in the personal and professional development of their students by recognizing that integral to their work is to “shepherd” students through and into change.i[i] In this space, students and teacher begin to experience a heightened awareness that all things are possible and that we are all part of an infinite universe in which we determine the shape and content of our daily experience.

Humans are multi-sensory beings and have access to a sixth sense or higher consciousness that guides us to reach beyond our human limits. Many artists speak of seeing things differently while drawing, for example, and have mentioned that drawing puts them into a somewhat altered state of awareness. They say that they feel alert and aware yet are relaxed and free of anxiety, experiencing a pleasurable almost mystical activation of the mind.ii[ii] This “mystical activation” of the mind or spiritual intelligence, so to speak, becomes the gateway to higher order thinking skills such as problem solving and decision-making. Spiritual intelligence is defined as the capacity to use a multi-sensory approach – including intuition, meditation and visualization – to access one’s inner knowledge in order to solve problems of a global nature.iii[iii]

It is well documented across many fields and recently with greater fervor- that there is indeed a unique perception, a higher state of awareness and a shared yearning for greater purpose that acts as a significant variable in our understanding of human potential. It is important to know that *all* children occupy a place on the continuum labeled Spiritual Intelligenceiv[iv], contrary to what some educators propose – that spiritual intelligence is of and for the “gifted and talented.”

It is this very quality, this spirit variable of a child that transcends the human condition. Unfortunately because we don't always *see* children the way they really are, just like we don't always see ourselves for who we really are, our essence, our "soul," so to speak -- accepting spiritual intelligence as a truth cannot be assumed and becomes an ongoing process of discovery. One of the goals of spiritual education is making a constant and deliberate intent to see children and all human beings with a heightened sense of awareness and reverence and to accept as truth this deeper dimension that we may or may not fully understand at our own personal stage of development. That our assessment of a child's development or growth will be as far as our own development or growth allows us to see and therefore the possibility of limitation will always exist. We as educators can never be certain because certainty in our judgment of another human being falls outside the realm of spirituality.

In a pluralistic setting, transcensory education/spiritual education aims to unify and build community amongst beings who on the material plane carry diverse identities. Self awareness and raised identity consciousness can have many outcomes. I know this personally and academically. As one gets closer to understanding the self, there is an initial feeling of separation and individuation that can separate the "self" from others in a dualistic manner. Furthermore, if you are a person from a particular ethnic group, race, gender, sexual orientation or religion that has historically been oppressed, greater self-awareness creates the desire in you to want to fight for the rights of your particular group. Others from the outside of those oppressed groups can choose to become an activist as well but ultimately the same duality occurs. Consequently, many groups exist, each divided by identity lines. Activism becomes about fighting for "rights" that are distributed by those with greater power. In this way self-awareness raises identity consciousness, which feeds into the illusion that we are separate and that we have to compete for a bag of goods that somehow was put into the hands of the "other" or the enemy. It is my current belief that this type of activism, activism without a deep understanding of the universal spirit, can go against the common good because it perpetuates divisiveness and a limited view of reality. It is in this limited view of reality where we are separate and scarcity exists. It seems to me that the roles in history (like in all power relationships) keep changing and the oppressor becomes the oppressed at one point or another and that ultimately it is the attachment to "identity" that divides us because identity like borders, creates the illusion of separateness and that nature can be contained. It is this worldview that has created the passport. What is this passport and how has it been allowed to gain so much power over the lives of beings? This can be understood both literally and metaphorically.

All of these thoughts lead me to propose the following goals of transcensory/spiritual education, specifically within a pluralistic society:

- We are all human beings who share one common experience, that is this thing called life.
- Human beings in life are conditioned by personal and social identities that impact how we see the world and understand reality.
- Self-awareness and social awareness is a necessary and immediate step in all education. We must critically see ourselves within the context of the world to gain an understanding of the limitations inherent in the human condition.
- We can transcend the human condition in so far as we recognize the existence of a greater reality or energy source that is defined differently by different communities but which is ultimately concerned with matters of the soul or spirit.
- Teaching the whole child includes this spiritual dimension and actualizing one's human potential depends on it.
- Transcendental/ spiritual education is the underlying force behind personal and social transformation.

Rios: What is the purpose of spiritual education and what is the role of the teacher in this paradigm?

In my opinion, the purpose of spiritual education is a clear communication of the core spiritual principle that the universe is an indivisible whole thoroughly pervaded and intimately connected by its ground of being. Its implications define the purpose of human life and ethics for entire humankind. It becomes our responsibility then to fully absorb this principle taking it deep into our consciousness in order to live our lives accordingly. This principle is totally unifying and inclusive of all beings and the environment.

The promise of religion is to achieve this purpose, but human history shows that it has failed to achieve it. Why?

Religion is a two-faced institution. One unites and the other divides.

Religion confines infinite reality in finite forms rendering somebody's God less Godlike, somebody's prophet less prophetic and another's community less righteous and deserving. This is the divisive face.

Spiritual education promises to use a unifying face to dull the edge of the divisive one. Religion builds communities and core spirituality builds one human family in the wider universal context.

Religion is meaningful only to its followers. Core spirituality on the other hand is meaningful to the whole humanity. Religion has become the basis of exclusive tribal values. Core spirituality is the basis of inclusive and shared human values.

It is ironic, with religion, that what starts off unifying people into communities becomes the

very thing that divides them. Community is good, but divisive tribalism is not.

Religious doctrine veils core spirituality and its propagation is not in the worldly interest of the institution of religion. It is obvious that religion is ineffective as a vehicle of teaching our underlying oneness and shared human values in a pluralistic world.

Religion builds religious identities. Core spirituality, on the other hand, transcends religion and can help human beings in transcending religious identities on their way to global human identities. Globalization of human minds is essential to eliminate identity savagery that is currently becoming commonplace.

The propagation of core spirituality and the building of global human identities is a matter of essence for the educational systems of the world. The educational systems must rise to meet this challenge if humanity is to survive the global problems it faces today. A measure of spiritual education is its success in facilitating spiritual insights for humankind to lead loving and constructive lives in unity and cohesion.

The prime role of the teacher in this paradigm is to keep its purpose in focus at all times and strictly follow a set of ethics for the delivery of spiritual education.

Spiritual Education must be delivered and pursued ethically. It must be remembered at all times that spirituality and religion are complimentary and not in competition with each other. Religion seeks to build communities of human beings while spirituality seeks to knit all beings into one family. Spirituality seeks to highlight the universality of religion. It regards all religions as different starting points of the same spiritual journey.

The important conclusion of spiritual endeavour is that it is senseless to bring in the element of exclusivity in one's religion while downgrading others. This conclusion needs further elaboration because what is advocated here is not merely tolerance of other religions but mutual respect and acceptance of other religions. This can be ensured only when there is no seed of intolerance at all in the pursuit of a religion.

According to Meister Eckhart, "Everything pertaining to the spiritual realm is inclusive and unitive by nature, whilst matter is by nature exclusive and implies separative particularity; the more spiritual a thing is, the more inclusive and thus universal it is, and the more material a thing is, the more it excludes other things by the very rigidity of its specific contours."

It is my firm position that spirituality that lies at the core of every religion is "inclusive and unitive by nature"

Talwar: How do you think spirituality relates with religion? What should be the strategies to ensure the support of religion in the promotion of education in universal spirituality?

I find the relationship between spirituality and religion problematic especially for many who

consider themselves progressive, liberal or open-minded. The reason for this relates to your argument that religion has fallen into divisiveness, dogma and ritual in practice- void of any real spirituality. Religion has also been at the helm of many atrocities worldwide and so social justice minded folks could be skeptical of what I call, “institutionalized” religion. Notwithstanding, religion plays a very positive role in many people’s lives including within my own family. I was born into a Catholic family and we understood religion to be the place where we could entertain thoughts of miracles, help from the “spirits,” the importance of prayer and honoring tradition. This was and continues to be good food for the soul and so my reticence to applaud religion and my skepticism regarding any zealous expression of religious affiliation in my life is a paradox. Unfortunately, religious dogma has distracted me from thoroughly examining religion and scripture, which is where many of the great sages have found a home and a forum to communicate core spiritual ideals – those which I espouse.

Spirituality transcends limitlessly. Religion, on the other hand, encourages transcendence only to a point. It often feeds off the immediate, material and “ego” for sustenance. Religious doctrine veils core spirituality causing many a good intentioned soul to get lost in dogma and to move further away from the One spiritual truth. That is why there is great discrimination and slavery within many religious households.

One relevant book that helped me to reconsider “religion” from a more objective standpoint is Tolstoy’s *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. It really was the first book that repositioned religion for me and articulated the separation of religion from core spirituality, as well as its political context. I want to love Christ when I understand Jesus’ teachings and yet it is difficult to articulate this within the current context of religion. I love Buddha and the language associated with Buddha feels more free, and yet Buddha and Christ are the same and One. Why is this so? It is difficult to speak of Jesus with true love and compassion without feeling a sense of shame and repulsion for how his name is being used to spread hate and ignorance. I don’t want to be affiliated with that “identity.” I share this personal dilemma because I believe that my experience is far from unique and my work in the field of transcensory education will push me to critically reflect on these issues constantly. I believe that if I am honest and open about the challenge inherent in religious talks verses spirituality, others like myself will consider revisiting the notion of “the spirit” in education.

I worry that if people like myself do not step up to the plate and claim spirituality for its real worth, then religious fanatics will continue to push ahead misguided messages in our silence. It is important that we do not allow religious talk, or spirituality to be monopolized by the status quo because we negate our innate desire to know the unknown and speak and walk in truth. Children, most of all, need to know that we can take a stand for truth and at the same time not espouse any one religion over another. They need to know that knowledge and power are communicated through religious doctrine and that our silence, our decision to not take part in the spiritual debate is allowing a mere few to manipulate how we see and understand the spiritual world. It is simply not fair.

Therefore, it is extremely delicate and important as we move ahead with spiritual education initiatives and for this reason, I agree with you, Dr. Talwar, when you say, “Terminology is an important factor in the research and development of the intended body of knowledge” and that

you do not recommend expedience in the deciding factor. What is the immediate goal and what is the ultimate goal of spiritual education and can we incorporate both? I ask this because immediate goals might require the use of alternative terminologies so as not to alienate the very people we need to commune with in our efforts to promote the spirit in education and our holistic understanding of human potential and the evolution of our planet.

You ask me what I suggest as strategies to ensure the support of religion in the promotion of education in universal spirituality. One strategy is to creatively build a new language around the field in order to ensure the engagement of common people who are at the immediate stages of spiritual development. There are many people who will not even engage in a dialogue if it is presented in a certain way. Why not create multiple entry points to the same material through the use of language? You say that we have to be careful not to compromise standards and I respond, this is true, however standards are likened to certainty and both, I fear, fall outside the realm of the spirit. What difference does it make how the conversation starts as long as the conversation has started?

Another strategy is to connect with and build alliances with organizations that work with religious groups who are committed to inter-religious understanding and cooperation. There are some larger organizations such as Universal Peace Federation ([www.upf.org](http://www.upf.org)) and The Tanenbaum Center for Inter-religious Understanding ([www.tanenbaum.org](http://www.tanenbaum.org)) and some smaller organizations like Faith In Place ([www.faithinplace.org](http://www.faithinplace.org)) doing this kind of work. It is important to attract members of different faiths to work and network together because each member can network within his own religious group. The goals of these alliances should be to identify common ground, plan large scale initiatives that galvanize large constituency groups, develop a research and development agenda, advocate and lobby for education policy, work together to identify funding, share resources and publicly engage in an ongoing dialogue.

### **Rios: How can spiritual intelligence be applied to every day life?**

In the context of this question, it is relevant to understand what spiritual intelligence is, how it is obtained in the first place, and how it is deepened and sharpened. Intellectual knowing is necessary as it creates awareness which provides the motivation to start the journey, but it is not enough. Why?

All of us are born with physical bodies and its needs keep us narrowly focused on them in a selfish manner. At birth, our cognitive and active senses are developed only partially and our intellect is not developed at all. We begin our lives with awareness limited to the fulfillment of physical needs only. We develop a sense of dependence on those who help us with our physical needs. Our dependence begins to turn into emotional attachment sowing the seeds of love: what we call natural familial love and affection.

Our helplessness in meeting our own needs and dependence on others initiates a sense of

finitude to which are added a mix of likes, dislikes pleasant, unpleasant, pleasure, pain, and fears. These create a sense of self, an identity, the “me concept” even before we start feeling any natural love and affection. The “me concept” has had a head start on all other feelings and faculties, most certainly on the intellect which develops so very slowly.

Spiritual ideas such as oneness, unconditional love, universal love, sense of one universal family have not only to be planted but also cultivated. Remember, spirituality is a matter of the intellect and the selfishness in the “me concept” is natural. In my opinion, the real purpose of education is to expand the “me concept” to include all beings in the universe.

I have studied various wisdom traditions to some degree. They all agree on a necessary condition for beginning the journey towards a spiritually intelligent life and that condition is attenuation of the “me concept” which is called variously by names such as creaturely self, nafz, ahamkara, nefesh hayyah, inferior reason, ego self or simply ego, etc. They also agree that it must be totally eliminated for full expansion of consciousness to include all beings in the universe (expressed as the ability to see “God”); the words used in various traditions are to that effect are “Death”, “extinction”, “uprooting”, “transcendence”, “stillness” of the ego, etc.

So some kind of handle on this “me concept” or ego is necessary. We need to:

- Attenuate of the ego to start on the road to spiritual intelligence;
- Progressively weaken the ego to continue further on the road; and
- Silence it completely or make it extinct for total all inclusive oneness or love. This is the state of human perfection described variously as liberation, salvation, nirvana, tawhid, buddhahood, etc.

Spiritual intelligence is intelligence to align our lives to the truth of all beings in the universe. The truth is that there is One unseen ineffable spiritual reality that manifests as “us” beings in the universe. The degree to which we see and live that oneness is a measure of our spiritual growth and the degree of spiritual intelligence we have achieved.

As we saw earlier, our ego consisting of our likes, dislikes, fears etc. comprise our limited identity. When we get something we don’t like, do not get something that we like, or when we see danger, our ego identity is threatened and we feel stressed. Everything else remaining the same, the stronger our sense of likes, dislikes, and fears, the stronger is our ego identity and the higher is our stress level. Therefore, reduction of the ambient level of stress is a good place to start for taking control of the ego for its attenuation, reduction of its strength and final stillness.

Stress reduction is also referred to as the attainment of inner peace which is the characteristic mark of spiritual attainment on one hand and the prerequisite for spiritual development or spiritual intelligence on the other.

There are various strategies for this purpose. I am not knowledgeable in many, but I will share

with you what I know. It is important to note the characteristics of this strategy: it is evidence based rather than faith based therefore it is didactic and secular. In addition, one can feel its results -- even measure its efficacy.

Psychologically life is a process consisting of cycles of stimuli and response; physiologically life is a process consisting of cycles of inhalations and exhalations. The stimulus-response cycles can be autonomous (as in reactive lives) or under control of our volition (as in thoughtful lives). Cycles of inhalations and exhalations can be autonomous or under the control of our volition.

Brain is a physiological organ. On one hand, it acts for the mind and, on the other hand, it runs the various functions of the body. Thus, the body and mind are so intimately related that the psychological and the physiological life processes mirror each other.

Ego is a faculty of the mind and it “thinks” that it knows” everything. It runs the psychological process automatically (reactively) without or little involvement of the faculty of intellect just like the primitive part of the brain runs the physiological process of breathing automatically without involving the thinking part.

Spirituality is not natural, therefore spiritual intelligence does not grow autonomously; on the other hand it is a subject of thought. If we let the psychological and physiological life processes run autonomously without involving thought, spiritual intelligence does not have a chance. Thus for spiritual intelligence, we need to involve thought in life processes, in stimulus and response cycles psychologically and in inhalation and exhalation cycles physiologically. The extent to which we are able to involve thought in these processes determines the extent to which we are able to attain spiritual intelligence.

With this background, we can outline a technique for the development of emotional intelligence:

- Breathe with thoughtful awareness as much as possible; be aware of every inhalation and be aware of every exhalation.
- Thoughtful breathing will make life thoughtful; you will notice every stimulus carefully and respond thoughtfully. Remember psychology mirrors physiology. This is emotional intelligence.
- Emotional intelligence opens the doorway to spiritual intelligence.

Various exercises in breathing with full awareness can be developed for teaching mindful breathing. We must stress the need to develop a habit of breathing with awareness as much of the time as possible.

Autonomous breathing is shallow and fast. Stress also makes our breath shallow and fast. Breath with awareness of inhalation and exhalation slows down the rate of breathing and also deepens the breath. Each deep breath is then fuller taking in more air into the lungs for

providing us with vital energy. Not only that every minute we spend in breath focus is a minute away from focus on our stressors, but we are also breathing in more vital oxygen. The result of the process is significant reduction in stress.

Now let us focus on your question of the application of spiritual intelligence in everyday life. Again I will only address this question in relation to the above strategy. Acquisition and application of spiritual intelligence in every day life promises significant benefits to an individual, his family, community and the world at large:

- Physically, it promotes physical health and prevents physical disease through the minimization of stress level. The mechanism is stress reduction that both leads to spiritual intelligence and results from it. We now know very well that high stress adversely affects the immune system leading to all kinds of disease including hypertension, head aches, hardening of the arteries, heart and stroke problems, cancer, and many others.
  
- Psychologically, it promotes mental health and prevents mental disorder. Reduced stress levels enhance the application of focus to life problems resulting in positive solutions, makes for thoughtful rather than reactive lives, helps in better management of learning, relationships, anger, habits, addictions, etc.
  
- Spiritually, it opens up the mind to deep insights through decreased stress and increased focus. New insights in turn lead to a higher level of spiritual intelligence through the raised level of consciousness. One feels better connected through the feelings of oneness resulting in love first with the immediate environment and then with the global environment. One reaches the ultimate spiritual intelligence when only One exists and there is none other.

Talwar: Various UN bodies have asked for inclusive spiritual education. Why are the recommendations of the various UN bodies merely gathering dust? What are the strategies to overcome the resistance to this change? What will you say to the political and educational leaders of a nation to convince them to implement education in universal spirituality?

I think that we are scared of the power of spirit in education. In part our fear is a result of our indoctrination – that is that we fundamentally believe that the realm of the spirit pertains to religion and therefore should not be included in real education discourse and policy making. I further believe that even though we can recommend inclusive spiritual education on paper, it is very difficult to put into action because making inclusive spiritual education a reality is an affront to the status quo and the status quo controls the necessary funding and resources necessary for it to get done on a large scale. The status quo, mind you is also you and I. I do

not once remove myself from this dilemma; we are all apart of it in so far as we are dependent on a source of income or identity in order to acquire our basic needs and then some, in many cases.

The United Nations, like any other large organization can fall into the paradigm of becoming “institutionalized” and self-serving. It a natural threat to the political organization. The fact is, we have not yet considered that if freedom existed, why would we need the UN? How would the role of the UN change globally? The very nature of its existence depends on the fall of nations and conflict. The traditional role of humanitarian oriented organizations is to provide possible solutions to problems in society, employ an “elite” staff of professionals in the research and development of these solutions, deploy many of these professionals out into the field to engage with the “problem sites” and to return safely to their home bases to write and disseminate reports on the atrocities they see, create and present lofty initiatives to address these atrocities, participate in an endless cycle of conferences, panels and professional experiences that appear to be acts of advocacy and every once in a while to implement a mission, a program, a project that in the end serves very few and whose benefits lasts for a very short time. Please do not misinterpret what I am saying here. The UN and other organizations have done good in the world and I don’t mean to simplify or belittle the work of these organizations, however I have always believed that with all of the resources at our disposal and all of the technological advances and amazing developments in the world – it just doesn’t make sense that we still have poverty, for example. Let’s take New York City. It is the home of many impressive peace, social justice and other humanitarian organizations, is it not? And yet on one corner you see the sky rise building that houses these organizations and their employees and directly across the street in some cases, fifty men and women waiting on line for the soup kitchen to start serving. This is not the poverty that Americans often speak about somewhere over there in Africa, it is the poverty in our own backyards; it is the poverty we experience in our daily lives. What is our reality? Do you see a discrepancy? I want to believe in our good intentions, just like I want to believe in public education. But when I go into a dilapidated school that resembles a jail more than a place for learning, I frankly find it difficult to accept that we are really working for the same thing and we really care about all human beings. Perhaps lofty recommendations gather dust because they are born out of a systemic practice that is within itself part of the problem.

How many of us are really willing to sacrifice, do the work it takes to make sure that we are all free from the burdens of the human condition? How many of us really believe that there is enough to go around and that we can all eat, have a decent roof over our heads, have access to health care, learn to read, lead? How many of us are willing to put our own career, our own paycheck, our own children on the line in order to insist, demand and fight for change?

Which strategies do I suggest to overcome this resistance to change? I can only share with you

the strategies that I use to lead the humble life that I live and that I believe is transforming miraculously into something that might resemble a true and spiritual life. Perhaps these strategies are one and the same.

We must constantly speak and live the truth in everything we say and do. I have often felt ashamed of my own human weaknesses and have wanted to hide from them but my own weakness is my neighbors too and I have to feel free to share my suffering and my pain even though I might not see any immediate point in it. I also try to listen to others and bear witness to their stories, their struggles and in any instance try to offer words of solace and help, if I can manage in some small way to make a difference in how they see or live in the world, I try to do it. Here is a big challenge for me and I fail at it often, but I continue along and engage in this practice as best as I can. I hope you understand that I am still trying to answer your question about strategies to overcome resistance to change at the political level and in front of leaders of a nation. This means that if I am in a position in which I find myself engaging in a conversation with a person in a leadership position, someone who I believe has a certain level of influence in the material world, it is imperative that I speak and act the truth with that person even if that may threaten personal gain (which it will, I assure you.) We all have the opportunity to engage with people of influence at one point or another and we really don't know how far up on the ladder of influence that interaction might go (or sometimes we know exactly how far up it goes) and in those moments -- to speak up and speak the truth is probably the greatest strategy you have to overcome resistance to change because you are opening your spirit to that person and showing them just what it looks like and often we fall into the habit of talking about spirit without actually living in the spirit. What does spirit look like? Perhaps I am suggesting that we need to model alternative ways of being and seeing.

I firmly believe there is nothing that I can say that can convince leaders of a nation to implement education in universal spirituality. I don't assume any authority or right to convince anybody or any national leader to do something that is not in their heart to do so on their own. I also cannot presume that there haven't been hundreds before me who have at one time or another, gotten down on his or her knees, to beg for the same. The fact is we do not have the power to convince anybody to do anything. We can only create the conditions within ourselves and starting with our own immediate circle that will lead to the implementation of universal spirituality in education. How can we further create these conditions?

I suggest that make your voice heard in a public forum in a capacity that you can handle, consistently and persistently. It is important to continue the education of people in formal and informal ways because we most fear what we don't understand. The more people understand what education for liberation is (freedom), what spiritual education is (freedom), what transcensory education is (freedom), then more and more people will naturally want to participate in it. He who is not free, will not see any door before him. He who is free walks

through the door and wishes to hold it open behind him. However, since it is easier to walk through an open door than to see it, and *seeing* is at the heart of real change, it is important that we include in our strategy an educational forum to share the experience of other ways of **seeing and being**. Engaging publicly in dialogue is moving the hidden into the light and creating the conditions in which more people have access to a deeper understanding of universal reality and as you put it, Dr. Talwar, Oneness.

A final, but important strategy that I have been experimenting with is learning to remain flexible and open to as many art forms of freedom education possible because like religion, they are all part of the same journey. It is important to remain unattached to language and terminology, but rather become attached to the essence of a movement, which will inevitably take on as many faces as we have on earth. Do not care so much which approach to align yourself with - only that its purpose and integrity are the same. What is the essential practice of transcending the limitations of the human condition for inner and outer peace and community?

**Rios: Why do you think there is a push to understand transcensory education from a scientific perspective? How does the scientific tradition of “objectivity” work against a real understanding of transcensory education?**

Some may consider it an anathema to put spirituality and science in the same sentence. To my mind, such thinking is based upon misunderstandings both about spirituality and scientific objectivity. Spirituality is not mere religious doctrine; it is on the contrary, about the truth, it is quintessential religion comprising its very foundation. At the same time, science is not merely imagination or image breaker; it only breaks those images that are imaginary with no base in reality. Spirituality is scientific objectivity applied in religion. Both science and spirituality have one thing in common, their search for the truth with the truth defined as something that does not change with time, place or the environment.

Scientific method prevents science from overstepping its domain. Faith, on the other hand, does not have similar built-in control. Conflicts are natural when the pronouncements of faith in objective domain cannot be affirmed by scientific objectivity.

I am a student of Patanjali who systematized the discipline of yoga into a science of contemplation to achieve union (yoga means union) with the object contemplation or seeing its objective truth. Spirituality is about seeing the objective truth of reality as a whole (existence) and science is about seeing the objective truths of existent objects.

With this background, I do not think that scientific objectivity works against the transcendental; scientific intelligence and spiritual intelligence are not each other's enemies, on the contrary, they are mutual friends. Having said that, I must add that over enthusiastic empirical focus is not science in the same way as mere faith and religious doctrine is not spirituality.

Early nineteenth century science was characterized by positivistic reductionism with attention zealously focused on the empirical domain narrowly confined within common human experience.

Our perception of the truth by the bottom up approach typical of science is a process which is dependent upon the vagaries of time, place and the environment. The understanding of the truth in both science and spirituality depends upon our time dependent capacity of subtle perception.

The tools of perception in spirituality are our senses, logical reasoning and testimony of other seekers of spiritual truth. There are shortcomings in individual tools, but they are all that we have. We can increase the level of certainty by taking steps to overcome their shortcomings.

The tools of seeking in science are no different except that science continually strives to extend the reach of human senses with the use of instrumentation and that of inferential logic with mathematical reasoning. The testimony of spiritual seekers is replaced by the findings of other scientists.

The early age of science perhaps perceived the material world as that of multiplicity - each instance of matter as an individual unconnected with the others. But in the current knowledge of science, the entire infinitely diverse world of matter is ultimate one: energy, which is totally inexplicable in material terms. The current position of science may be summarized as follows:

Infinitely diverse material world is comprised of one fundamental reality, energy. Energy is omnipresent in the material world. It not only comprises the fundamental material particles, but also resides in the large empty spaces between and around them without which there will be no particulate integrity. Thus, energy is both immanent and transcendent to matter which is comprised of energy, sustained by energy and which dissolves back into it at the end of time.

Material diversity is simply due to different atomic arrangements of elementary particles. The micro world of atoms and subatomic particles exists in wave-particle duality and is not subject to deterministic cause and effect; instead it is a world of multiple possibilities and non-locality.

The macro material world is subject to strict determinism of cause and effect. Material interactions at the macro level are initiated by energy at the micro level to produce different particulate arrangements resulting in further diversity.

Science today recognizes three levels of reality for matter namely gross deterministic reality of common human experience underlain by a micro reality of multiple possibilities and non-locality. The micro-reality determines the gross form. It is thoroughly pervaded by the unseen shared material reality called energy. It is energy again which coalesces as the various subatomic particles. I am sure anybody who painted this picture of matter in the early period of science would have been subject to ridicule by the then men of science. Recognizing that the world of matter excludes life and consciousness how is this tripartite picture of matter different

from the body mind spirit model of human existence presented by our spiritual seekers eons ago? Science now says that energy is the shared underlying reality of matter; our spiritual seekers have been proclaiming unequivocally that all beings in the universe share one unseen and ineffable ultimate reality.

Modern science is not a problem in the development of spiritual intelligence. The problem has been our failure to see meaning in it. We are addicted to compartmentalizing knowledge. We have to learn to integrate and integrate meaningfully.

The conclusion of underlying oneness may not be meaningful in the insentient material world, but it is immensely meaningful to thinking beings. It must be brought out and highlighted in our educational systems using full force of all spiritual traditions and secular disciplines including science.

Talwar: With most of the world caught in the religious paradigm, what kinds of curricula and strategies are needed by the educational authorities at the university, college and school level in successful implementation of this new educational paradigm?

We need curricula that is inquiry driven raising important questions about the socio-cultural, socio-political and spiritual context in which we live. The content is far less important than the process. We have extensive knowledge around content, and although content appears to be constantly changing, the truth does not change. That is why revolutionizing the process should take precedence. Teachers are not mindless robots that should be required to memorize a prescribed set of lessons and formats that would be meaningless in any other context. Teaching is a creative and transformational act for both student and teacher. That means curricula should be a metacognitive experience for both. If the teacher is not equally interested in the search for truth as presented by clearly articulated exploratory questions on the nature of life itself, then the child will not learn the passion of learning. Therefore, curricula should be elastic, non-linear and revolve around the exploration of relationships, present different opportunities for teacher and students to engage in activities that nurture critical thinking, collaboration, imagination, agency and contemplation – just to name a few of the essentials. This list is neither determined nor finite.

I have found in my work that engaging teacher groups in the process of curriculum development towards these aims is extremely rewarding and beneficial. I don't mean teachers from different schools working with researchers or academics towards the creation of a curriculum to sell to schools. I mean teachers of one school coming together to participate in the theoretical, conceptual and creative basis that becomes the overarching questions that drive instruction. Teachers are not used to taking responsibility for their role as educators and liberators in the classroom and are often unaware of the power they have in their daily interaction with children. In order for curricula to have meaning in the classroom, teachers need to have an intimate understanding of the why, the how and the purpose behind every decision that is being made and school communities need to value this process above anything. I also want to add one final but important word about teacher participation in developing

curriculum frameworks. I have seen efforts in this area fail because there is a seemingly “democratic” process around teacher groups and decision making around curriculum. Not everything is up for discussion. When a school attempts to adopt a transcensory approach to teaching and learning teachers need to understand that they are part of a larger movement and must be personally committed to its mission. So, in a teacher group working together to build a curriculum framework, they might spend time exploring how to foster mindfulness in the classroom, for example. They don’t spend time exploring whether or not to include mindfulness into the daily practice. Some teacher groups are given way too much decision making power and they feel empowered to spend quality time trying to theoretically dismantle the very mission and vision of the school! Effective leadership and taking a definitive stand in front of the school community is a prerequisite for successful implementation -- especially with regards to alternative approaches to teaching and learning. It is the only way to strengthen community behind a movement that goes against the status quo.

There are several strategies that should be considered when working towards galvanizing support around the implementation of curricula that aim to promote heightened consciousness:

- Strategically position the initiative as an interdisciplinary approach rather than trying to bridge it to one subject. Curricula that aim to promote awareness and heightened consciousness can supplement many subject areas such as humanities, social studies, language arts, advisory, health & ecology, political science and the arts to name a few.
- Collaborate with teacher education programs at the university level in order to engage in research and development of the curriculum
- Offer professional development to the school sites in order to directly impact and include voices from the field
- Make a consistent effort to assess gains in student agency, stress and conflict reduction, heightened consciousness, critical thinking and problem solving skills, relationship skills, and literacy.
- Integrate the use of on-line learning platforms to cut across borders and establish a diverse constituency

**Rios: According to John Bloomfield, historian/author of *Other Ways of Knowing*, politics is a manifestation of the state of our individual and collective consciousness. In turn, politics shapes our consciousness. Do you agree? How would you describe the relationship between transcensory/spiritual education and social change? Is spiritual education a political act?**

I understand the goal of politics as the science to work for common good saving individuals, societies, and humanity from the excesses of individual and collective human condition. In that

sense, spiritual education is a political act.

I agree with John Bloomfield that politics is a manifestation of the state of our individual and collective consciousness.

Our current state of consciousness has reduced politics and politicians to an art of trickery for self aggrandizement at worst and/or communitarianism and tribalism at best.

Today humanity is split badly into factions on the basis of religions: God, prophets, ritual, denominations, sects etc.; geography: countries, states, regions, counties, districts etc.; race: white, black, yellow, pink; gender: male, female; sexual orientation: bisexual, homosexual; and so on. Each faction is in conflict with the others for its “rights”. We are exploiting, terrorizing, and killing each other in the name of perceived injustice. We invoke the name of our God in justification of genocide we perpetrate.

Admittedly, there are differences in the world and what kind of world would it be if there were no differences between human beings. Just imagine what life would be like if there were no difference in sex. Would there be any life at all? Just imagine, if everybody thought alike, life would be very bland; or if all flowers were the same color, spring would have no meaning; or if all days were rainy, there would be no sunlight and no food to eat.

Differences are there for a reason. The reason may not be apparent. They are put here by the same universal consciousness as put us here. Currently, there is no discipline of education on earth that teaches our youth in a meaningful didactic manner the fact of our underlying unity and how to celebrate our differences in the light of it.

How can there be social justice if we do not see everyone alike? Jesus said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” How can that happen if I do not even see my neighbor as myself? If I do not see him as myself, I can’t love him as myself; if I do not see him as myself, how can there be social justice? If I see my neighbor as inferior, I justify more for myself and if I get more, I keep my mouth shut and let the neighbor fight for social justice without my support. If the neighbor’s voice is not heard and I do not help, what is she/he supposed to do?

Therefore, education to see my neighbor as myself is education for social justice and if education for social justice is political in nature then spiritual education is a political act. Jesus Christ is a perfect example of a politician who taught to “love thy neighbor thyself.”

The current educational systems the world over emphasize human awareness of the external environment or our own particular doctrines rather than the awareness of the essence of one’s own existence. I think that this lack of self-awareness leads to a one-sided development of human awareness skewing the path of spiritual development. Our educational systems prepare us more for the business, scientific and technological worlds on one side and to keep us busy with our particular ritual and doctrine on the other and less for the realms of understanding our own human essence and that of the universe. Who are we? What are we? Where do we come from? Where does the universe come from? Why are we here? How do we relate to one another and how do we relate to the universe? How do we come about and how does the

universe come about? How should we behave with one another and how should we behave in the society and the universe where we exist? Educational systems do not lay enough emphasis on questions such as these and most of humanity is left to answer these questions using individual resources or by chance discoveries. Such a lack of systematic preparedness in matters of human essence and essence of the universe leaves us without proper perspective in making free life choices. We are caught in a box of natural tendencies and conditioning, which seem to drive us. Free will to chose in this box is not the free will of which we are capable. If education were to cause spiritual development in step with developments in the external world, it is imperative to strike a balance in the emphasis on matters of essence relative to the external environment.

Evidence of this lack of balance is present everywhere. In this post-modern era, the human mind is capable of developing space and air travel, computers, smart machines, the internet, human clones, lightening-fast communications, rapid means of transportation, health and disease control, etc. In comparison, there is no discernible improvement in inner human condition that underlies behavior, minimal standards of behavior being enforced from outside through laws, legislation or reciprocity of selfish individual, national or regional interests.

Unchecked passions seem to take control. Pleasure-seeking through sex, alcohol and drugs, seems to be commonplace. Family commitments weaken. Love, respect, and compassion generally seem to be absent or lacking or limited to our closed communities. Violence is commonplace. Emphasis on sex and pornography is alarming. Pleasure seeking, tribalism and communitarianism replace noble goals of life. Loneliness and depression seem to increase and mental health seems to deteriorate as we have more external facilities with increased technological development.

Hatred and lack of tolerance abound. Shortsighted profit motive and greed drive everything. Environment is being polluted to the extent that the very life on earth is threatened by climate change and ozone depletion. Weapons of genocide and mass destruction are so numerous that the whole population of the earth can be destroyed many times over. Humankind seems to be rushing towards hatred, violence and destruction without looking back. In general, we seem to lack the internal human tools to deal with changes in lifestyle brought about by increased development in the sphere of external environment. On the other hand, in the less developed parts of the world, comparisons with the developed parts have generated feelings of injustice and despair leading to loss of hope and growth of radicalism and extremism. Intolerance, hatred, and acts of terrorism have sent shockwaves around the world. Humankind seems to be in a state of turmoil. Peace, both individual and collective, seems illusive. Fear and greed appear to have taken humanity in a tight grip.

It is my understanding that in North America more Internet traffic is generated by each of the pornographic and gambling businesses than by any other human endeavor. Considering that North America is a developed region of the world with free and compulsory education until high school, one can imagine how this would be used in geographical areas of the world with little literacy, development, or education. Internet is a technological development with unlimited potential of human good. But look at the human condition that has reduced it to be a tool of slavery to baser instincts rather than a tool of freedom from slavery from natural

instincts and inclinations!

Admittedly, leadership of some of the so-called developed nations has taken seemingly important spiritually progressive steps in the form of legislation guaranteeing basic human dignity and rights to their citizens, but lacking accompanying spiritual growth of the individual citizen, legislation remains ineffective especially in situations involving conflict with the houses of power. On an international level, human rights considerations remain subservient to national interests or absolutist visions of religious leaders in-charge of interpreting God or God made laws. Of course, there are instances of enlightened leadership on international level through acts of removal of walls, boundaries and barriers, but again such acts are largely driven by national and regional interests rather than spiritual or human considerations. On an individual level, humanity seems to be drawn towards pleasure seeking either here on earth or in heaven after death, mistaking momentary pleasure for lasting happiness and incapable of managing personal relationships, the environment and individual lives. We value pleasure to an extent that we are willing to go to heaven to enjoy it.

Leadership of nations cannot be essentially different from the individual citizens from whom it is drawn. In that sense, our collective consciousness determines the type of political leaders we live with and leaders in turn with the policies determine the type of consciousness in which we operate. That in fact also is true of our leaders in social, religious and other spheres of life.

Human history abounds in instances of religion being used by powerful political and economic forces for achieving their goals usually at the cost of immense violence, pain, and misery. Religions themselves, through misdirected institutional loyalty and human condition, have acquiesced in being exploited by internal and external divisive forces.

Today, modern technology has incomparably enhanced the power of these divisive forces. Instant communication and fast transportation have made the world into what is likened to a global village. At the same time, modern weapons have immensely increased the scope of mass destruction. As a result, alliances of the religious with the political, economic and other divisive forces have never been deadlier. There is an urgent need to attenuate human condition to prevent the formation of these deadly alliances.

Recent history has amply demonstrated the need of taking effective steps in guiding humanity in positive directions not only by preventing the divisive use of religion, but also by promoting the legitimate role of core spirituality or quintessential religion in uniting humanity.

Two major crises that are facing humanity today are increasing religious radicalization of the world population and global warming as a consequence of mindless exploitation of natural environment in turn resulting from our unchecked greed and selfishness on one side and desperate populations on the other. The severity of these crises is seen as threatening the very survival of humankind and the global environment. Our core spirituality enables the profound perception of the entire universe as an integrated and unified whole in which each one of its beings has its legitimate place. As a result, widespread education in the core spirituality has the potential for the resolution and the prevention these crises.

Amanda Ripley (Reverse Radicalism, Time, Vol. 171, No. 12, March 24, 2008) considers the question, “Why do people leave terrorist groups?” She quotes research to the effect that educating “radicals about the gap between their religious ideals and the groups they follow” is helping them to leave radicalism in favor of peace. It is worth noting that the significant conclusion of Ripley’s article is that the realization of the bankruptcy of the radical narrative represents the turning point from radical pursuits. As a result, nearly a dozen countries have begun programs to educate radicals in religious enlightenment.

Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa (<http://www.fltfilms.org.uk/imam.html>) of Nigeria lead opposing militia groups in Kaduna resulting in great personal costs and costs to their communities. Wuye lost an arm and Ashafa lost two sons and a teacher in 1992. Now the two men are co-directors of the Muslim-Christian Interfaith Mediation Centre in their city, leading task-forces to resolve conflicts across Nigeria. The turning point came when a spiritual teacher of Ashafa enlightened him about what his religion truly teaches i.e., its core spirituality.

These studies are affirmations of our human condition; it is such that we suffer first and then look for a resolution of our suffering. Wouldn’t it be wise to use education in the core spirituality as a preventative measure as well?

Jeffrey D. Sachs (Common Wealth, Time, Vol. 171, No. 12, March 24, 2008) argues that our survival requires global solutions to the global problems facing us today. We have no choice but to end ‘our misguided view of the world as an enduring struggle of “us” vs. “them”’. According to Sachs, “What we call violent fundamentalism should be seen for what it really is: poverty, hunger, water scarcity, and despair.”

To address these crises, Sachs notes that we have made global commitments and treaties which remain unfulfilled and real solutions have failed to emerge because of a long list of barriers such as cynicism, defeatism, outdated institutions, competing nationalism and unchecked greed.

Sachs suggests clear objectivity, new sustainable technologies, clear implementation strategy and sources of financing. He concludes with the crucial need of transcending the list of barriers which is related with our human condition. “We will need science, technology and professionalism, but most of all we will need to subdue our fears and cynicism,” says Sachs. He emphasizes his conclusion by quoting John F. Kennedy in exhorting us to end our differences and to make the world safe for diversity.

The solutions suggested by Sachs are all transcendental in nature; without clearly saying so, Sachs is in fact advising spiritual development on a global scale to transcend our human condition without which he sees no hope for global survival. Education in quintessential religion which we call the core spirituality of humanity has the potential of the kind of transcendence required to address the grave global crises we face today.

Global crises need global identities and we need to globalize human mind to acquire global

identities.

United Nations stand for world governance and governance is a political act. Let us see what the various UN bodies have to say about the type of education needed to address world problems. Their recommendations clearly show the connection between politics and spiritual education; today's political problems are crying out for spiritual education:

- According to Article 26 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations (<http://www.un.org>) says, "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace."
- It is to be noted that "UNESCO is committed to promoting inclusive quality education." "Inclusive education is based on the right of all learners to a quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives. Focusing particularly on vulnerable and marginalized groups, it seeks to develop the full potential of every individual.

The ultimate goal of inclusive quality education is to end all forms of discrimination and foster social cohesion" (<http://www.unesco.org/en/inclusive-education/mission>, and <http://www.unesco.org/en/inclusive-education>).

- In 1987 the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development issued a call for creation of a new charter that would set forth fundamental principles for sustainable development. The drafting of an Earth Charter was part of the unfinished business of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and it was completed by an Earth Charter Commission setup on the initiative of Maurice Strong and Mikhail Gorbachev with support from the Dutch government. The 32nd General Conference of UNESCO in October 2003 supported a resolution 'recognizing the Earth Charter as an important ethical framework for sustainable development.'

The Earth Charter (<http://www.earthcharter.org>) is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It seeks to inspire in all peoples a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the human family and the larger living world. It is an expression of hope and a call to help create a global partnership at a critical juncture in history.,

The preamble to The Earth Charter opens with the statement: "... To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations." It goes on to emphasize that "The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life." and that "We must realize that when the basic needs have been met, human

development is primarily about being more, not having more.” It goes on to remind us of our responsibility saying “... we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities.” The Earth Charter urges us all to affirm a set of shared principles as a common standard by which we conduct ourselves and one of the principles (14.d) requires us to “Recognize the importance of moral and spiritual education for sustainable living.”

Historically, education has been a matter of governance and public policy. Education in the core human spirituality therefore also is a matter of governance and public policy. Our universities and institutions of higher learning must be charged with the responsibility of transitioning education into the core spirituality of humankind.

We must approach the project with caution. It cannot be left to religions to teach what is of grave importance to the entire humanity. Neither can we simply throw the problem in the lap of the school system without adequate preparation. It is an issue of paradigm shift from religiosity or secularity to the core spirituality; religion unites individuals into communities, humanity at large finds the narrative of stark secularism as devoid of purpose and deep meaning, and only the core spirituality has the potential of globalizing human mind to build one world community. We simply cannot afford to miss fully realizing that unifying potential for the sake of our survival.

Before we jump right in, we must involve our institutions of higher learning in an ongoing basis in strategic research; development of curricula, teaching and learning resources; training and preparation of teachers.

As noted above, one infinite ineffable reality lies at the core of peak spiritual experience of sages, seers and prophets. Communicating the concept and the meaning of one inexpressible reality underlying its infinitely diverse creation is a massive challenge.

Fortunately today, the dialectics and technology of communication are far more developed than in earlier times. We have a variety of well developed knowledge disciplines in the fields of humanities, social, natural and life sciences. The peak experience of the sages falls in the domain of these disciplines. We must bring the collective force of all these disciplines to bear in facing this communication challenge and in taking the life changing spiritual understanding deep in human consciousness. Our universities must engage in an ongoing research effort towards the development of spiritual intelligence.

Talwar: What would be your suggestions for curriculum outlines for teaching universal spirituality at the various educational levels? Although cognitive learning of universal ideas and concepts are important, what kind of curricular learning will raise the level of consciousness beyond mere intellectual learning?

Building a curriculum can be a powerful tool if done well. The written word is easily reproduced and put into the hands of the multitude. Carefully framing curriculum is essential. The greater elasticity of the material, the further it will be adopted across disciplines and educational contexts. Teaching to Transcend: A New Life Skills Workbook is an experimental

approach towards this aim. I describe it as a holistic educational experience because it is organized around relationships, it is inquiry driven, it emphasizes the importance of “social responsibility” (Dewey) and focuses on the journey or process of discovery and expression. Holistic thinkers understand that human consciousness introduces other levels of reality, beyond the physical matter, biological life, or instinctive behavior. Therefore, holistic education purports to include the experiences of intuition, extrasensory perception, meditative insight, and enlightenment that have been reported throughout history, from all parts of the world. It suggests that there are dimensions of reality far more subtle and complex than the material world, which we usually call the realm of the soul or spirit.v[v]

Seeking purpose in the human experience and the recognition that we have the capacity to unleash unlimited potential if we are in alignment with a universal, intelligent and natural “energy” has been around for a long, long time. Yet, in the current climate where teachers are exasperated with standardized test driven instruction and increasing responsibilities toward improving math and literacy in the classroom sometimes working under the most egregious conditions - teachers struggle to reconnect themselves with the joys of teaching and learning.

Students struggle to find meaning in schooling. Even in school environments where there is abundance there is often no time to stop and contemplate the small things. Technology and fast paced media does impact how we value time and space and how we “see” ourselves in relation to the world around us. Transcensory education is about taking the time out to “see” things differently.

The key therefore is how can we create an environment in our classroom that allows for this heightened state of awareness to exist so that students and teacher enhance their ability to access their maximum potential as human beings – creatively, spiritually and academically. We now know that different tasks activate specific brain regions and that experience such as stress or exposure to violence can affect brain functioning and result in increased anxiety, aggression or impair decision-making and judgment, for example.vi[vi] Conversely, research demonstrates that peak experiences (Maslow) or spiritual experiences lead to more effective thinking and planning, higher moral reasoning, greater emotional stability and decreased anxiety. Therefore, it only makes sense for educators to explore ways in which “peak experiences” are deliberately integrated into the classroom.

The goal of transcensory education is fundamentally to create the conditions in which students and teacher reconnect themselves with the joy and purpose of learning, to learn to transcend the five senses to include multi-sensory perspectives, to teach agency and one’s capacity to change, to learn and practice interconnectedness, to foster creative expression, critical thinking and non-linear patterns of thought. Transcensory education can be seen as the intersection of many approaches to teaching and learning and theories of human development and evolution. In sum, transcensory education is about returning to a state of awareness that is ultimately

organic in nature. This means that we are deliberately “reconnecting” with the natural and holistic way human beings have been learning and evolving over time.

For this approach, I have adopted some key practices and themes with which to begin framing learning experiences in the classroom. Strategically framing learning experiences is at the heart of any meaningful teaching and learning experience. That means that I do not prescribe a series of lesson plans but a metacognitive *framework with which to launch, organize, present and reflect on* information. Effective framing is critical when connecting learning to the *being* - it is the *lens* through which we present material, it provides the spirit and the purpose. In theater, this would be called “setting the stage” so to speak. The power of teaching is less about focusing on the content, but honoring the process. This is the first step in understanding education for enlightenment.

The key practices provide the group with important behaviors or habits that will help understand how we learn from a transcensory approach. The themes are universal focus topics that help uncover issues that are most relevant to the evolution of the human experience.

The key practices are:

§ **Contemplation:** Thoughtful observation, reflecting on purpose and intention, practicing patience, stillness and quiet

§ **Dialogue:** Listening and strategic storytelling, building a safe space, rituals and community circles

§ **Creation:** Producing artwork, singing, movement and dance, journaling and creative writing, music, performance

§ **Activism:** Visiting other organizations, embarking on pilgrimages, bearing witness, working and volunteering, demonstrating, public speaking

The themes are:

§ ***Personal Awareness:*** Identity, Cultural Studies, Physical attributes, Personality, Behavior, Health, Metacognition

§ ***Relationships:*** Love, Family, Responsibility, Conflict Resolution & Mediation, Belonging, Emotions, Sharing, Intimacy

§ ***Society & Politics:*** Community building, equity, public speaking, public policy, leadership, justice and organizational psychology, war and peace

§ ***Global Awareness:*** Ecology, economics, international affairs, the environment, poverty, natural disasters, world hunger and equity issues, travel, space

§ ***Spiritual Intelligence:*** Spirituality, religion, rituals, ceremonies, faith, belief systems, metaphysics, dreams, intuition, perception, visualization, energy frequencies & vibration, meditation, miracles

In conclusion, I stress the importance of metacognitive process over content. In order to do this, I have developed a framework with which to present educational experiences that will create the conditions for heightened awareness to exist in the classroom. This framework revolves around essential practices and themes and is driven by essential questions that must be explored collaboratively and creatively. This approach aims to address both intellectual and transensory goals in the classroom. If we strategically position a framework over multiple disciplines that underline our universal Oneness, we bring meaning and purpose to content. The creative use of language and terminology can expand universal spirituality into the secular environment. Developing and implementing curricula frameworks such as this will undoubtedly have an impact on the spirit in education but it requires consistent effort, documented research in the overall affects on student gains, effective collaboration and ongoing dialogue across borders and a diverse constituency.

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