

*(A comment on the 2003-Meet of World Social Forum,
Indian Chapter at Hyderabad from January 2-6, 2003)*

Another World Is Quite Possible On The Basis Of A Nature-Human Centric Agenda But It Is Really Impossible If Approached Through Irrelevant Issues And Incoherent Themes

1. The first meeting of the World Social Forum (WSF), Indian Chapter, is going to be held at Hyderabad (India) from January 2 to 6, 2003. The meeting's agenda has been captioned in the phrase "Another world is possible" and "Another Asia is possible". The meet is expected to sort out the shape of "Another World" and "Another Asia".

I. Wide Distance Between Existing Realities & WSF Agenda

2. Like its earlier two attempts at holding big international gatherings (the first at Porto Alegre (Brazil) in January 2001 and the second at the same place from February 1-5, 2002), the WSF's Hyderabad endeavour is also expected to draw a sizeable number of participants who are eager to find a way out of the prevailing general confusion all around. But a look at the Hyderabad Agenda shows that the end result of the present effort is not going to be different from the WSF's previous two initiatives. That is, the emphasising of incoherent themes, having no relevance to the existing world realities.

3. Briefly stated, the human world today is confronted with highly serious challenges, unprecedented in its history. That is, a fatal environmental threat; an exploding human development crisis marked by unprecedented inequality and poverty; US aggressive moves to dominate and control the emerging global order; newly arising menace from the recently refashioned fundamentalist trends like Hindutva, Pan-Islamism, Western Free Market Philosophy, Marxian State-Managed Proletarian Utopia, etc. Apart from the above-mentioned life and death issues, the dangers coming from daily rising violence, crime, corruption, woman and child oppression, minorities suppression, extinction of tribal and aboriginal livelihoods, daily-worsening miserable conditions of different varieties of unorganised labour (who collectively constitute more than 50% of the human world), spreading terrorism (both nation state-sponsored and religion-oriented), attacks on human rights and civil liberties in traditionally known democratic countries, like the US and UK. Even a cursory glance at our world shows how the above-mentioned basic threats, serious challenges and day-to-day dangers have made a hell of human life in the beginning of the 21st century.

4. On the environmental front, the constantly increasing volume of green house gases (GHGs), depleting global water resources, large-scale deforestation, degradation of more than 60 percent of arable land, dying out of many bio-species and unsustainable use of other natural products has created an existential crisis for the human race as well as other bio-phenomena. The scientific community has since been highlighting the worsening state of our environmental aspect. A large number of reports have already been released by various renowned scientists on different environmental issues. Of these numerous reports, those which have calculated the time frame in regard to the maturity of the crisis, two are particularly worth mentioning. One is the warning sounded by 6,000 famous scientists of the world in the year 2000 which emphasised that if the human community did not stop the production of GHGs in a short span of time, the global warming would make the earth uninhabitable for bio-life by the end of the 21st century. The other is the 2002-UN's WWF

study which has warned that if the human community (especially the rich nations and the rich persons) does not change its extravagant and wasteful lifestyle, our planet earth will become unsustainable for human life within 50 years. Other scientific experts, who have not committed themselves to any time-table, do admit that the environmental situation is highly alarming.

5. On the human development plane, almost all the global institutions concerned with human growth, i.e., the UNO, WB, IMF, WTO, etc., have now been stressing the unsustainable mode of our existing development model, mainly characterised by unendurable inequality, inequity, poverty and injustice. The 2002-UN Human Development Report expresses: the world's richest 1 percent receive as much in terms of income as the poorest 75 percent. The 2001-UN Human Development Report writes: "Of the 4.6 billion people in the developing countries, more than 850 million are illiterate, nearly a billion lack access to improved water resources, and 2.4 billion lack access to basic sanitation. Nearly 32 million boys and girls are out of school. And 11 million children under age five die each year from preventable causes equivalent to more than 30,000 a day. Around 1.2 billion people live on less than (the equivalent of) \$1 a day (1993 PPP US \$), and 2.8 billion on less than \$2 a day. Such deprivations are not limited to developing countries. In OECD (Organisation For Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, more than 130 million people are income poor, 34 million are unemployed and adult functional illiteracy rates average 15 percent." This report further states that the richest 10 percent of the US population (around 25 million people) had a combined income greater than that of the poorest 43 percent of the world's people (around 2 billion people). The 1999-Human Development Report says: that, by the late 1990's, the fifth of the world's people living in the highest income countries had 86 percent of world GDP the bottom fifth just 1 percent, 82 percent of world export markets the bottom fifth just 1 percent, 68 percent of foreign direct investment the bottom fifth just 1 percent and 74 percent of world telephone lines, today's basic means of communication the bottom fifth just 1.5 percent. The 1996 UN Human Development Report tells: just three of the world's richest people have the combined GDP of the 48 least developed countries. The world's 225 richest people have a combined wealth of over \$1 trillion which is also the total income of 47 percent of the poor who number 2.5 billion. The wealth of 32 of the world's richest persons exceeds the GDP of South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives) plus Iran and Afghanistan.

Interestingly, the Mughal Emperor at New Delhi (Like Jahangir, Shahjahan, etc) during his climax of power used to have an annual income of Rs 15,000 at the present-day prices, according to an expert estimate.

6. As regards the U.S. aggressive moves to dominate and control the emerging world order, it (i.e., the US) is trying to act as the unchallenged policeman of the world. After its single handed military success in Afghanistan, it has become more unilateralist and belligerent. Now it has declared a perpetual war against its own alleged world terrorism, so far defined neither by the UN nor some other UN member. The first targets of its offensive include its so-called "rogue states" i.e., Iraq, Iran, North Korea, etc., which are UN members and cannot by any logic be characterised as terrorists. There is worldwide disapproval, including that from China, Russia and EC, of the newly-declared US offensive plan. But the US has so far not relented on the launching of its new war project for establishing its world overlordship.

7. Coming to the fundamentalist trends, the different varieties of religious fundamentalism are creating hatred among various religious groups and conditioning the peoples mindset on fanatic lines. Free market philosophy is creating unbridgeable divide between the haves and the have-nots. The state-led communist utopia is keeping the workers backward and wage-oriented.

8. As to the dangers arising from the daily-increasing violence, crime, corruption and the deprivation of women, children, tribals, unorganised workers, etc., they have become a general world phenomena, characterising every country.

9. The absence of the above-mentioned existing basic realities in the WSF Agenda presented at its international meets since the Forum's origin in 2001 shows the latter's distance from the living facts.

II. WSF's Hyderabad Agenda

10. Taking up the WSF's Hyderabad agenda, its central proposition aims at "conceiving and constructing an alternative to globalisation in Asia." But the pity is that the forum has nowhere (neither in this agenda and nor in any of its other documents) and at no time defined the concept of globalisation. However, a close look at its various vague and disjointed views on globalisation shows that the WSF considers globalisation as some sort of social system. This is nothing but a distorted understanding of this newly-emerged phenomenon.

11. What is globalisation and what are its demands? The facts indicate that globalisation is a newly-emerged process which encompasses the whole world. In human terms, it indicates that the human movement has become global. Since movement implies a change in space and time, it follows that there has occurred a change in human spatial (of space) and temporal (of time) position.

12. The change in human spatial position is evident from the fact that humans can now travel from one place to another at the supersonic speed which was impossible some time back.

13. The change in temporal position is obvious from the new telecommunications, internet and electronic media devices which have made human mental inter-action possible at the speed of light. This facility has become common today. Some time earlier, it took months to make such a mental contact.

14. Obviously, the above-mentioned changes are the direct outcome of the new scientific-technological inventions and hence globalisation is an objective process and not the creation of any subjective thinking.

15. Historical experience shows that all crucial scientific-technological changes have always been followed by the corresponding social changes transforming the whole way of human life, i.e., its way of thinking, working and organising. This can be seen from a whole series of historical facts, e.g., the emergence of nation states with their respective democratic party politics, free market economy and consumerist culture accompanying the industrial scientific-technological revolution; the appearance of feudal states with their respective feudal politics of "the divine right of kings to rule", feudal economy and feudal culture following the agricultural scientific technological changes.

16. Today, globalisation too represents a given stage of material and human development, characterised by certain new processes of nature, like energy, materials, space, information, biology and so on. This new level of scientific-technological process and its impact on human understanding and living too demands the restructuring (or updating) of the old continuing nation-state system and its corporate development model into a new global social order. But the nation-states, led by the US are resisting this demand of the newly-emerged process of globalisation and all those who are mistakenly opposing globalisation as a system, representing new liberalism and domination of capital (or imperialism), are lending help to the US-led nation-states in their effort to exploit the process of globalisation for their respective national interests. Thus, the facts demand that the WSF takes a realistic view of the objective phenomenon of globalisation which stands for the restructuring of the nation-state system into a new global management.

17. The restructuring of the old nation-state system involves the following main points:

(A) A clear understanding of the present world reality: i.e., a world of inter-dependent nations or a world of quasi-national and quasi-international states.

(B) The need for a clear vision: i.e., the vision of one world.

(C) The fundamental principle of one world vision: to put the people and the environment at the centre of global activity. Approach towards people and environment be based on scientific realism.

(D) A democratic global order: UN to be based on the democratic principle of one-nation one-vote; discarding of all privileges, like veto-powers; ensuring of a stable peace by discarding the politics of super-powerism or hegemonism; and resolving of all conflicts through dialogue.

(E) Politics: based on peoples empowerment.

(F) People and environment-friendly development: characterised by a 2-sided priority— i.e., people, on the one hand, and environment, on the other and based on the 5 principles of environmental sustainability, equity, productivity, democracy and transparency.

(G) Economics: oriented to peoples development and environmental promotion instead of being geared to corporate fundamentalism and state determinism.

(H) Culture: based on rational humanist thinking and democratic behaviour.

(I) Security: to be ensured in all walks of life, especially the livelihood security.

18. However, it is the nation-states, the promoters of corporate model and the opponents of globalisation, who are resisting the above principles to be put into practice and thus thwarting the onward march of human community.

19. Comparing the WSF's six-point Agenda [i.e., (1) peace and security, (2) debt, development, trade, finance and investment, (3) nation-state, democracy and exclusions, (4) social infrastructure, (5) ecology, culture and knowledge, (6) Alternative and peoples movement] with the above-mentioned demands of globalisation (para 17), one can see that this agenda constitutes a jumble of vague and unrelated issues, having nothing to do with peoples immediate and long-term interests.

20. The WSF's vagueness and confusion with regard to the process of globalisation stems from its age-old traditional sociology which emphasises one-sided human-centric approach and self-reliant progress. Such a concept neglects the nature's role in the process of human origin and development and ignores the human mutual inter-action in generating social progress whether it (i.e., social progress) pertains to a family or a nation-state. Secondly, it arises from its wrong understanding of the process of globalisation which it misinterprets as a global still system instead of being a process of human inter-action on the global scale. The social system is still the prevailing nation-based corporate system, operating in every country of the world. Thirdly, it comes from its (i.e., the WSF's) failure to see the root cause of the existing troubles in the fundamentals of the corporate system than in its inessential aspects. Fourthly, it lies in its characterisation of present day capitalism as new liberalism which denote that this capital is being provided to needy countries freely or generously or a charity, while the actual reality is that the ongoing corporate capital is becoming more and more protectionist. Already, this protectionism exists in developed countries' agriculture. Soon, it may affect their manufacturing sector. The corporate protectionism may also spread to newly-emerged regional trading areas, such as NAFTA, ASEAN, EU etc. Fifthly, it rests with its further interpretation of inter-dependent corporate capital as imperialist capital that only indicates the Victorian stage of capital when the latter (i.e., the Victorian capital) used to act also as a handmaid of its nation-state. The current inter-dependent corporate capital, on the other hand, is solely interested in its own enterprises, which are nowadays often located in more than one country and thus are not country-specific.

III. Cause Of The Existing World Troubles

21. The long-term cause of the existing world troubles lies in the corporate system which aims at profit maximisation or attaining the highest growth rate. Both the liberal and the Marxist versions accept the growth rate as the single criterion of judging social prosperity and progress. In their search for achieving the highest growth rate, both have been running havoc with the environmental and the human development factors. Since the attainment of money and power represents the maximisation of one's (or self) interest, the whole world is now chasing after these 2 "life-extending elixirs."

22. The short-term cause of the existing world troubles rests with the corporate system's operational agency (or the government). Oriented solely by self-perpetuation, the leaders of

the national governments (based on the party system in every country) are mainly concerned with the amassing of their own wealth and the holding of an ever-lasting power, by fair means or foul, with no consideration to the mass interests or any enviro-bio issue. Their pet lifestyle is “to say one thing and do the other.” They always shed tears for the poor and the deprived, but at all times serve the rich and the dominant.

23. The sociological roots of the corporate system and its operational agency, firstly, reside in the one-sided philosophical understanding of the Adam Smithian and the Marxian development models (both of which have functioned as two standard development modes of the ongoing, but now retreating, nation-state system in various parts of the world). This one-sided understanding is that man constitutes the supreme phenomenon in the system of nature on our planet and even in the universe. Obviously, it projects people as the sole builder of human society and everything in it, disregarding the social truth that the change and development in human society takes place due to a 2-sided inter-action, that between nature and society, on the one hand, and within human society itself, on the other.

24. The second sociological mistake arises from the one-sided understanding of the Adam Smithian and Marxian development models about the human nature. The Adam Smithian economic model holds that humankind is selfish by nature. The Marxian economic theory takes a confusing stand on the question of human nature. Firstly, it emphasises that mankind is social by nature. The next moment it transfers the quality of being absolutely social to the industrial proletariat (who is, according to it, destined to be the liberator of humankind). And, finally, it passes the entire monopoly of the social characteristic on to the communist party which alone, in its view, has the capacity to bring a social transformation in human society.

25. In reality, however, humankind bears a 2-sided character: biological, on the one hand, and social, on the other. The biological aspect reflects the individual existence of mankind, while the social side denotes its social living, functioning and organising.

IV. A Realistic Response To The Existing World Troubles Lies In Restructuring The Corporate System On The Basis Of A Nature-Human Centric Agenda

26. Given the world corporate system as the cause of the existing world troubles, a realistic response to the latter (i.e., the world troubles) is, and can be, to restructure (or update) the existing world corporate system on the basis of a Nature-Human Centric Agenda, comprising the following points.

Vision: The nature of our planet and the 21st century's social reality of the inter-dependence of nation-states provide the nature-human centric paradigm the vision of one world, while the 1945-UN charter gives one the vision of sovereign and independent nations, a vision contrary to the existing reality.

Fundamental Principle: The fundamental principle of the above-mentioned vision should, firstly, be to put the people and the environment at the centre of global activity (i.e., to serve the peoples interests, on the one hand, and to take care of the environmental conservation, on the other).

Global Order: The fundamental principle of Nature-Human Centric Vision and its enviro-human priority demands that the UN be restructured on a democratic basis, style and organisation. But the UN, as it stands today, lacks this quality. The UN general assembly's structure and functioning is quite democratic. But its top decision making body, i.e., the security council, is characterised by highly unfair and totally undemocratic norms i.e., the permanent membership for the militarily most strong five nations and their special veto rights.

Obviously, any attempt to fully democratise this body would, at this moment, encounter stiff resistance from the 5-member privileged club. So, taking into account the existing global power structure, it seems that the full democratisation of the security council will take some more time. For the time being, the rule of special veto powers should be done away with, while retaining the norm of permanent membership till the change in the ongoing balance of

power. All other seats in the security council should be filled through election by the general assembly.

The rich countries control over IMF and WB be reduced and the poorest countries be provided more voice in the WTO.

Development Model: The fundamental principle of people-environment priority (which is imperative for human development) demands a new type of development model that stands for a five-fold fundamental principle, i.e., environmental sustainability, equity (to be ensured by maintaining only 1:5 difference in incomes and by guaranteeing social security as a fundamental right to all those who fall below the poverty line or are fully unemployed with no support from any quarter), productivity, democracy and transparency. This five-fold fundamental principle corresponds with the bio-social nature of humankind, i.e., it co-ordinates man's self-interest with his social interest.

The people environment based development model represents the updated concept of development in contrast to the two traditional national development models, i.e., the corporate-led and the government-directed. While the corporate-led development model singles out profitability or productivity (which ensures the interests of money-owners alone) as its sole aim, the government-directed one opts for socialisation (or the nationalisation) of the means of production as its only goal (which serves the interests of the ruling politicians and bureaucrats). Both these traditional national models, serve only the self interest of humankind contrary to his bio-social character, i.e., comprising both the self interest and the social interest. Again, they do not accord any priority to environment and any place to the upholding of democratic and transparent norms in the economic or growth process. Further, while the corporate model totally rejects the principle of equity (or social justice), the government-directed one fully ignores that or political equity and productivity.

The Nature-Human Centric Model differs with both the corporate-led and the state-based development models on the issues of their purpose, management and style.

While the corporate model stands for developing the capital and capital owners and the state model advances the interests of its ruling politicians and bureaucrats plus the labour aristocracy, the Nature-Human Centric one serves the interests of people and environment, in general, and the poor and deprived sections, in particular.

In management, while the corporate sector upholds the monopoly corporate management and control and the state sector supports the monopoly bureaucratic management and control, the Nature-Human Centric development model stands for democratic management and control of public limited companies by elected joint committees, each comprising two-third elected members from ordinary share-holders, and one-third elected workers representatives in place of permanent corporators.

In style, contrary to the authoritarian and secretive corporate and state style, the Nature-Human Centric development model stands for democratic, transparent and accountable style.

Global Peace And Security: A Nature-Human Centric development model, first of all, needs a stable and durable peace and security. To establish such a peace, it is necessary that the politics of domination, privilege and special powers be discarded, mode of confrontation and military solution be ended by total disarmament and vesting the full control of nuclear weapons in the UN, political, economic and cultural inequalities be ended and the development gap between the developed and the developing countries and that between rich and poor be removed.

Politics: Nature-Human Centric politics requires a politics that is based on fully democratic principles, functioning and structure. Such a politics necessitates the ending of the rule of special veto powers in the UN system and the introducing of the principle ensuring the maximum possible empowerment of the people in decision-making corresponding to the necessary dilution of the party centralised power.

Economics: Nature-Human Centric economics demands a rational and realistic economics whose concepts, laws and rules are required to be framed in the light of former's 2 top priorities (i.e., humankind and environment) and 5 principles (i.e., environmental

sustainability, equity, productivity, democracy and transparency). In view of human's bio-social nature, both Adam Smith's basic economic principle of "self-interest" and Marxian basic economic rule of state nationalisation of everything are one-sided in view of human's bio-social nature. But, ironically, both measure development, prosperity and progress in terms of monetary growth and not in the context of human and environmental development.

Value System: Nature-Human Centric value system calls for a way of life (or lifestyle) that is embedded in basic human and environmental values and promotes rational humanist and environmentalist thinking, behaviour and organisation among the people.

Approach: Nature-Human Centric approach should stand for scientific realism which studies and interprets natural phenomena in the light of scientific facts and social objects on the basis of authentic information and data.

The above agenda enables us not only to face the challenges created by the corporate mismanagement to the environmental and human resources, but also provides us the way to make their judicious use in future. Above all, the implementation of this agenda generates the most appropriate conditions for the evolution of a rational human being and a reasonable and sensible human community. 01-01-2003