

Meet the Minimum Needs of All

Radh Achuthan, Peconic Bay Meeting

Friends share a concern about meeting the minimum needs of all people, which we define to be: providing adequate drinking water, nutrition, clothing, housing, primary health care and five years of primary education, to be achieved by the year 2030. Friends are advised to raise the issue on all occasions where it is possible to influence individuals, groups, and organizations. We charge our Clerk and General Secretary to make a special effort to speak about this issue with regional, national, and international groups. We encourage Radh Achuthan to continue his ministry on this issue under his existing travel minute.

New York Yearly Meeting approved this minute on a resolve to Meet the Minimum Needs of All (MMNA) on April 2, 2006. This concern, seasoned over the past four years, demonstrates the power of worship to bridge normal distractions that accompany central values of Friends. The loving care and nurture exercised by many Friends, as well as the worshipful scrutiny and clarifications of Friends, brought this matter to clearness. Flushing Monthly Meeting independently approved MMNA, and Scarsdale monthly meeting addressed MMNA concerns during spring 2006. Thus the love, nurturance, tolerance and spiritual contributions of Friends were central to the approval of MMNA.

NYYM has reengaged the spiritual concern for unmet minimum needs of people, striving now for a solution by 2030.

How are we to initiate a solution?

We all grew up under the "exclusion morality" of the 20th century with these features: There is "us" and "them." We shall "share resources with" and "undertake sufferings" for "us." The "scope of justice" shall be for "us." We are of course not related to "them." No fault of ours! But we experience "spiritual concerns" and take measures, also recommended by our spiritual institutions such as they are, to engage in "kindness" and to provide "charity." We are encouraged through "motivating" secular measures to participate in charity. Thus we have retained our self-centeredness while coping with some awareness of the sufferings of five out of six global "others." We learn that about 30,000 of the global poor die each day due to poverty. Now we are asking ourselves whether to continue to respond with the violence buffered by "kindness" and "charity" of "exclusion morality," or to devise new solutions to meet the aspirations of others and of the self?

As we assess the structural violence that is required to maintain the existing distribution of resources under the global political economy, the recommendation that we simply carry on as usual is spiritually indefensible. Clearly, new solutions are called for, as we take into consideration the abilities of the 21st century, and our improved understanding that there is no distinction between "us" and "them" on minimum needs, and strive to inclusively organize for the welfare of global human society.

"We" have already arranged society to meet *our* minimum needs of drinking water, adequate nutrition, basic clothing, basic shelter, primary health care and primary education of five years' duration. If we were to withhold from ourselves the minimum on any of these needs, we would realize that they are minimum needs of any human being. We would then, without question, experience a spiritual need to acknowledge them for all others and we would want to strive to meet them. We may conclude that the excess we are given from the global pot when minimum needs of many others are unmet—and that which we receive without question—is not ours to take in the first place. This value has not been absorbed by the global political economy. We could raise this value individually and organizationally before the global public individually and organizationally. To that end, we must enhance the "intention to MMNA" and develop the content of "Inclusion Morality on Minimum Needs," which would enable us to achieve this goal.

We morally defend past nonperformance on the "minimum needs of others" on the basis we did not have the necessary resources to do so. Maybe. But in the 21st century there are sufficient resources. Clearly, meeting the minimum needs of all is not a matter of personal choice, not an act of kindness or charity. MMNA is necessary, and arriving at the psychosocial infrastructure to meet these needs is a necessity. "Reciprocal altruism" suggests that we can advance ourselves better by contributing to the welfare of others; in the context of MMNA it could lead to enhanced benefits such as minimization of physical threat, reduction in the economic cost incurred for global security, and improved mental health for the facilitators of MMNA, namely the global First World population.

How shall we admit all this to ourselves and respond constructively, conditioned as we are in "exclusion morality"? Worshipful spiritual consideration of MMNA on an experiential basis, is one approach. Worshipful participation on the Web to create the content of "Inclusion Morality" is another, both over a two- to three-year time frame.

Given the stable operation of the global political economy through exercises of the global military- industrial complex, and the power we experience through our indirect psychological participation, is it sufficient for just a handful of motivated volunteers to participate in creating a MMNA outlook?

For a beginning: yes. At the outset, experiential cleansing of the spirit will firm up "MMNA intention." Further, consideration even by a handful of Friends at a blog site where others could visit and voluntarily participate, should effectively nurture the effort. Please visit blog <http://meet-the-minimum-needs-of-all.blogspot.com>. This type of communication is a blessing, inviting the spirit to congregate and communicate in a nonhierarchical, mutualistic manner. Our spirit has been stifled with subtle influences from spiritual institutions acceding to hierarchical control by secular institutions operating under "Exclusion Morality" practiced through various direct and structural forms of violence. Since some (many?) of us disagree with the subsequent view of ourselves as "violence- oriented beings," the opportunity to participate 24/7/365 in creating "Inclusion Morality" with a target date of 2030, would be a relieving and attractive spiritual opportunity and challenge. It would be a theme that diverts our energies away from the competition posed us by "consumerism," a wasteful, dissipative theme that would pale before the aspirations and promise of realizable MMNA.

As the "Intention to MMNA" and the profile of "Inclusion Morality" firm up over the next two to three years through the participation of untrammelled spirituality, (aspiring from its natural historical spiritual traditions, unfolding religion and denomination free on the web), the MMNA profile created, (to be delivered through witnessing), would permeate the global body politic as a new "open-source ethic." Appropriate "leadership" would emerge for meeting the minimum needs of all, making it the vanilla of morality flavors. The fruits of the global political economy would then be partitioned, voluntarily, to facilitate MMNA.

For those of us in the transition in this worthy challenge, theist, agnostic, atheist alike, worship within our respective beliefs would bridge our anxieties and make us whole. The "Inclusion Morality" generations that follow ours would have to seek new challenges of their own!

May God bless the whole world.