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REFLECTIONS TOWARD THE FUTURE

The Panchayat this year did a lot of visiting around the world to each of the Areas. I am not here to tell you about that visit, but I do want to give you an indication on how the Guardian dynamic has shifted over a period of time which was illustrated by this trip. We had a Guardian from the Cleveland Region with us and when she had to leave half-way through, she proposed that she take the rest of the team out to dinner. We found a restaurant and when dinner was over, the restaurant would not take this Guardian's credit card. Neither did the Guardian have enough money to pay for the dinner by herself. So we were glad to send her back to the United States. Next we went to Taiwan and a Guardian who was working for a multinational corporation met us. On our way to Hai Ou it was suggested that we stop for lunch. The Guardian thought that this was a good idea but the parameters were not clear yet. He asked if we knew of a good restaurant and no one in the car knew a good place. Everyone sort of mumbled a bit and about a mile later, the Guardian offered to take us to lunch. All of a sudden there many good places suggested. We went to a fine Chinese restaurant and George Emerick ordered on everyone's behalf. But when it was time to pay the bill, again the restaurant would not take the Guardian's credit card and he did not have enough to pay for the meal. There is a dramatic shift in the way these treks are working out.

I am not suggesting it as a really good trend for the future, but just to report the data to you out of those treks. I won't tell you any stories from the other treks, I think this has probably been enough.

Talks have always been one of our mainstays in any meeting we have. I am not sure how long they are going to remain a mainstay. I find them increasingly difficult to give and I experience that people find them increasingly difficult to hear. I find them increasingly difficult to hear when I am not giving them. I think this talk is about reflecting on the future of our work. The most difficult job I had in trying to get this ready was trying to decide who I was talking to in this body of people. Sometimes that is not hard, but I found it very hard this time. I know there are people here who indicate that they are here for the first time. There are a lot of people here who have been around longer than I have, and maybe like me are somewhat immune to being addressed. There are people who are incredibly engaged in their Regional Teams almost daily. There are people here who really don't know what the Regional Team in the region is doing. There are people here who are very conscious of what the movement is doing globally, but are not very clear about what it is doing locally in their own place. There are people here who have been in villages for consults in the time of the Twenty-Four. There are people for whom that is ancient history that they have heard tell about. A lot of people have lived in villages or in Religious Houses at some time in their existence... three months, six months or a year. We have often used the expression

when refering to some of those people as "Ex-Order". I think that is probably becoming an inappropriate and irrelevant term. The flip side of that is, I think in the next five years everybody in this room will have spent six months to a year in a Religious House, as part of what it means to be a Guilder or a Guardian or whatever in the world we are going to call this dynamic in the future.

I didn't have any artform to start this talk and then the journal was on the table for the meal. Turn to the 18th of April. "We are living at a time when numerous revolutions are changing our way of life and changing them fast." That's really good. I don't know who knew the Guardian's were meeting today when they put that in there.

When I first entered this outfit we talked about ourselves as being in a transition between civilization and post-civilization. I don't give much credibility to those words anymore. But, I want to suggest to you that that word, "transition" is not an adequate way to talk about the time in which we are living. We are beyond transition. We are in a new era. We are in a new time, we are not moving toward one. Now I am so conscious about this word that when people say we are in a time of transition, I say to myself "lie", we are not, in a time of transtion. We are in the new era for which we have no name. Drucker calls it the "era of discontinuity." Kind of intriguing. I didn't want to find out if he meant what we mean by it, so I quit reading and decided to say that Drucker had said that. That doesn't make it so because Drucker said it, but it is intriguing. If you want to know what the post modern world looks like or what the new era of the human experiemnt is going to look like, you don't have to philosophise about it. You just simply have to look. Doesn't that make it easy? That's all you have to do. Elements of this new age are: that there is nothing hidden; nothing can be lopped off; nothing can be excluded. We have talked about a holigraphic image of the world. That no matter where you look from you have the whole thing on your plate. There is no way to hide from the Faulkland Islands and no way to hide from the poverty in the Third World. There is no way to exclude it from your screen and to pretend that life can function without thinking or acting upon it. It is not viable anymore. The technological and the information revolution have radically altered our picture of time and space and the future. All of this is true,..."So now what?" isthe only question.

My only reflection on the transition is that first of all it changes absolutely nothing relative to the intent of this movement. Nothing. Our intent always has been human development. Whether in the old paradigm or in the new paradigm, the intent is the same. Yet everything has changed and the everything has to do with the approaches and strategies and directions of operations and structures... not a shift in intent.

To grasp the new paradigm is not by definition to be a revolutionary.. Armchair viewers of life can grasp the new paradigm. Do not confuse someone who talks lucidly about the wonders of the new age with having any revolutionary intentions at all. It is very easy to get confused on this point. It is clear that we are living in a time of the Global Village... one integrated reality. Information is global...but so is disease. The Spanish fruitfly made it to California and the Japanese worked hard to make sure it didn't make it to Japan. All of the economy has been effected by the Spanish fruitfly and I am not sure that the Spanish fruit-fly has ever been in Spain.

I was intrigued reading in an airline magazine the other day about the lack of water in the northern part of Russia, and yet they have all these rivers flowing south. There was some speculation about what it would mean to use our technology and change the course of the rivers, and make them flow north. Sounds good...they would have water. However, if they flow north, the warm waters of the rivers would flow into the Arctic and melt it. This would change the humidity and Russia would not be in trouble, but Canada would give up agriculture. This is the kind of world that we are living in.

There are no more closed systems where you can put barriers around the external situation or the internal parameters of your mind and exist in this world creatively. It does not work. Pluriformity is not a great idea of the Institute of Cultural Affairs which it is promoting because it would be great if people of all colors joined hands. Pluriformity is a fact. The migrations of this era are the largest migrations which have ever taken place in the history of humankind. There is not a city on the face of this earth that is not multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-religious. It was a shock to Australians to discover that for the first time in the history of Australia over 50% of the people living in Australia are from non-Commonwealth backgrounds. If you still think you have floated off from the British Isles and your structures will work that way, something is going to change. Not because it ought to, but because the facts of life are forcing it. Pluriformity is the way it is. And it is clear that what we have said for years and years as our basic ideology ... that all the earth belongs to all the people and all the goods, all the gifts and all of the decisions ... is no longer, if it ever was, theory. It is fact. It is the emerging ethic. The Cancun Conference was not about should people have health and should people have the wealth, only how. It is a different world that we live in and for most of us not the world we were born into imaginally. I was born into a world in which all the earth belonged to the West. That was the imaginal shape of my universe expressed by history books that were 575 pages long...500 of it on Western history and 75 on "others". That is a shift that we are in in our time.

Again, we must not be confused by people who are clear about this. You can be very clear and still not have embraced the fact that the local approach or the approach that gives opportunity for all people to participate is the mode of operation. I think the one thing that the trips the Panchayat took this year has racked me with more than anything else is our lucidity about the future... this body's lucidity about the future. I don't mean we know all about what is going to happen. I mean that we know that we as a body of people in history are under the gun and we know that it is not because we are so great. We know that no one else is doing what we are doing. If I could quote scriptures there is a verse about to whom much has been given much will be required. That seems to be where we are. The local approach is absolutely critical in order that the creativity of all people can forge the direction of the future. Not because it is a liberal thing to do. Not because it would be nice to help the natives. But because the creativity of the whole globe requires the whole globe. Because the revolutions in humanness are coming up from the 85% of this world. That is where the edge of the revolution is and historically always has been. In a time like ours it is absolutely critical in forging the future that all perspectives are engaged. When I use the word perspective I am talking about engagement. The only way to have a perspective is to be engaged. The other is abstract ideas.

Another thing that has happened today is that coalitions are. You and I in the first instance are not creating them, they are. They are there. The question for us is ... how to shape their context, how to empower effective methodologies, how to develop the structural designs and how to enable their significant engagement in a significant future. I was watching the news yesterday. As some of you know, the Chicago Housing Authority is in a bit of a bind, and somebody from Washington visited one of the highrises for fifteen minutes. This really irritated the residents, but right afterwards they pulled together a townmeeting with everybody in their apartment building to see how they were going to shape the future. Now my question to myself was, how do you take that local initiative and forge it creatively. Because you see they still believe someone else owes them a living. They have not grasped that their destiny is in their hands. They have grasped that they have the power to force somebody else's destiny to come to their service. This isn't all bad, but there is another step that our job requires.

We need to warn ourselves that everyone who is concerned with being in the local is not necessarily one who believes in this kind of local approach. This is another place you can fool yourself. All kinds of development agencies these days are in the local and some of them are doing superb work. But I only warn us, you can be in the village and live in the village as a colonialist as well as one who believes in the local, bottom-up approach. That is a job in terms of the imagination and spirit which we still have to do as a critical job in history. The International Exposition on Rural Development is about declaring the validity of the local approach and the capacity of local people and rural people to shape their destiny. Very few believe this. That is why it is a declaration.

In all of this I wanted to talk about who we are in this room. It strikes me now that what is required as we move with intensity into communities, into the structures of society, we are less concerned about someone guarding the mission than we are about someone being the mission. I was impressed in India when we went to the meeting to discuss the IERD and met Mr. Rowe who is from the Canara Bank. I guess he is a Guardian... Mr. Rowe is a Guilder. We might use that word, because he has delivered his bank to human development and himself to human development. He has delivered the internal structures of his bank and he has delivered his bank to participate in dealing with the issues of the 85%. I was with him in Chikale. He tried to say he was from Bombay. But all of the people who were in that meeting said, "You're not from Bombay. You're from Chikale." I thought... wow. The credibility of Chikale was not because Mr. Rowe wrote a letter of support, but because he was in Chikale. Because he risked giving the structures that his income depends upon as part of structural permeation. Many of us have not decided to risk our own workplace as the place where we declare the being of our mission. We need to remind ourselves as a body of people that the major contradiction in society remains in some form the 15% - 85%. There is an urgency in this because in our time the gap, the socio-economic gap is not getting smaller. It is widening. As people working in the Guilds you were working in this weekend, we need to remind ourselves that the information revolution in and of itself is not an answer to that gap. It can, given its own wiley ways, simply enhance the gap and change who the elite are unless there is some way that access to the information revolution is made possible for every local community across the face of this earth.

I suppose as we create the future, one of the things that is most irritating to us is that in our time there is a failure of imagination and a failure of nerve. Our job as Guildspeople, as the Movement, is to be those who are the declaration of hope. We are surrounded in our times by prophets of doom. The cover of Newsweek had a nuclear blast pictured on it. Now grant you nuclear war is a real possibility which people have to take seriously. But I suggest to you that the images of nuclear war have grown into a mythological category --- to be an expression of the terror of the melting away of all our old structures and sense of wellbeing. It is playing a role far beyond the issue of nuclear war. We need to guard against that in our own being.

There are also prophets of singular solutions. These are subtle. And when I talk about these I am talking about me. I am talking about the spirit issue in our own being. If we are going to be the catalysts of the future we have to come to terms with this. There are the prophets of the reduced responsibility. When I was young one of the key sayings in my Sunday school classes was, "If each person would be a loving person, finally the whole world would be loving." Well that is a totally inadequate statement. We need to guard against the idea that if I simply work in my company and change the structures in my company, finally every company will have new structures. It isn't any different. We need to guard against such things.

We need to guard ourselves against flogging dead ideas. I don't know, maybe we can figure out some kind of retreat to handle this. I haven't figured it out yet, but we need to purge in ourselves thinking that ungrounded abstracted liberalism shoved into the future will give us a clue to the shape of human community. Or that outmoded, conservative principles and ethics relevant for the last century will shape the new and necessary ethical frame. In fact the very categories of liberal and conservative are irrelevant and meaningless differentiations in this new era. Those are dead categories and do not grasp how the future is going to be created, I would like to suggest. I find it very interesting as we look at society to watch how our armchair liberals have become real conservatives and armchair conservatives have become psuedo-liberals. I think it is because they are dealing with misplaced guilt about the fact that we are in a new age and somehow, like the child who thinks he is responsible for his parent's divorce, feels responsible for the fact that God has taken the old structure out of being. Those things are within us. I am not talking about somebody else. You can be sure as we try to figure out the direction that the future needs to go that the dead ideas will continue to be flogged in our societies by both the pro-establishment and the dis-establishment with power. You can be sure that we'll go just so far in structural permeation and someone will discover that we intend a re-creation of the social fabric. All I ask of you is do not be surprised by this. We are, whoever we are, the trans-establishment who decide somehow to face the unknown, acknowledging these biases and these old images in our own being and erasing these dochotomies to forge a new direction and to build a new earth. We are beyond the dichotomies of rural and urban, structural versus community and Order versus Movement. To flog them is to live in illusion, to participate in an old mode, and to trap our creative thinking for the future in unproductive organization and action.

Now as we move to the future we face the challenge of zones of profound human settlement. Human Development Zones. We are clear that we are beyond demonstration. We are beyond the single village. As we moved from human development efforts in one village to several villages, we discovered over and over again that the structural logjam in society was the region. You can pour money in but the resources never get to the local. Local people never know where to go to request resources or participate in the decision making. When we moved to clusters and blocks we discovered that development on this level was more than simply a series of human development projects. We were dealing with a multi-facted socio reality that was different. You were dealing with the economic, the political, the cultural, the family, the mores, the religion...everything about society you had to deal with when you moved to the cluster. This is probably true for one village, but it is more dramatically seen. The clusters are foreshadowing the new social vehicle and the new spirit mode.

We have been fooling with the whole category of human development zone. What would it be like to have places in the globe with say 40,000 or 50,000 people who had so softened the milieu that schools began to think in terms of new methods and grasped a new ethic on behalf of all the earth belongs to all the people. Where businesses began to see social responsibility within the community and within the globe; where churches were permeated with a new image of their task; and where all the communities of that turf began to see how they related to each other and use decision-making processes whereby everyone could participate. That kind of bubbling is a manifestation of what the new social fabric could look like. Perhaps our key experiments in this right now are in Kenya where we have massively penetrated and worked with over 200 villages and have worked closely with the ministers of the government who are changing the direction of their work because of the creative rising up of local communities. This is also evident in Maharashtra where we are doing the block. There human development associations are coming into being that include the villagers, the bankers and the architects and the teachers in both the villages, the cities and the towns. Just what if we had those kinds of places across the earth in the next few years as signs of the direction of the structuring that can give to people a brand new story, a brand new understanding of what it means to be human, a new ethic and new structures through which to operate. I think that is what the guild is about. We will never do it unless we touch education. We will never do it unless we touch business. We will never do it unless we touch the volunteer care structures and the public sector and so forth within every aspect of a piece of geography. We don't know much about this. Our best learnings are probably Kenya, Maharashtra and Fifth City. But the next two years require research to figure out first of all what we already know about how the social process can be altered in order that the logjam at the region can be broken, or unglued so that it can be re-created.

We were doing this kind of research last summer and will be doing it this summer. Second, we need to research what it means to be a regional team and what it means to be a guild. Third, we need to research new ways of doing social analysis and how to discern the new ethics, not through abstract thinking but by our engagement in the structures of this society. Furthermore we need to research our approaches to the new spirit mode for our time and what the spirit tools are for those who care.

Now the heart of these human development zones is us. It is not a manual you hand out and someone else can do. The heart of the zone is the secular-religious, the deep people. At the heart of every 40,000 or so people there must be a core of guilds or cadres -- people who invest their lives as the vital cell in the center of local community. In the next twenty years we need a mass global movement of two million people in these communities who are self-reliant, self-sustaining and self-confident: the people of the new social vehicle and the people of the new religious mode.

There is a huge responsibility on you. The strength of the movement in North America is overwhelming. Now it is coming in other places but there is no place in the world that has the prowess and has had the opportunity for training and engagement in the way that the body in North America has. That puts a major responsibility on us for the formation of the guilds and the guardians and the movement across the globe. We do this not as a superimposition of a Western style, but as a sign of hope. Let us not in our North American Guardians' meeting think that the limits of our responsibility or action are just in North America. There are projects around this globe that still need the expertise and the time and engagement of you kind of people for three months, six months or a year. Don't limit your images to North America.

As we turned to the world we became more involved in-depth in the local centers of the globe where we live. It is easy for us as the spirit movement to get confused at this point. It is important that we get increasingly involved in the mechanisms and the structures and life of this world; if we are going to be an effective instrument in history, we need to remember what we knew a long time ago. Our stance in the world is not responsibility to the world for God, but responsibility to God for the world. There is a difference. We are responsible only to see that what the Mystery requires for humanness happens, whatever that requires of us. It takes a great deal of prayer and detachment to maintain that stance, especially when we are so deeply engaged in our local actions. Who knows what human development zones may call for? It may call for people to move into those zones and permeate a multi-national corporation. It may require that people stay in a place they hate for the next twenty years in order to see that human community happens in that zone. That is what I mean by being responsible to God for the world and not the other way around.

We are going to have expositions like IERD in regions and nations demonstrating what human development means and declaring it so that people have a chance to hear. I said when I started that I didn't know who you were and I still don't. But I do experience on thing that all of us, old or new, or whatever, stand at the edge of incredible anticipation about the future which is being created -- a brand new era of human development.

I want to close with a reference from Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary. Last night I discovered the three words, guardian, guild and guide are all on the same page. Guardian, according to Webster, is about defending something. Guild is an association with similar pursuits. But with guide, the book went nuts. It said that we needed to look at the synonyms because they were of equal importance to the act of guiding or leading. The synonyms are to lead, steer, pilot, engineer. "Guide"

implies intimate knowledge of the way and of all its difficulties and dangers. "Lead" implies a going ahead to show the way and often to keep those that follow under control and in order. "Steer" implies an ability to keep to the chosen course and stresses the capacity of maneuvering correctly. "Pilot" suggests guidance over a dangerous, intricate or complicated course. "Engineer" implies guidance by one who finds ways to avoid or overcome difficulties in achieving an end or carrying out a plan.

I am not sure who we are and what the future will call us to be. But after I got through with all of this I said to myself, "I am this, too." We are called to be the guides, to show the way over a complicated course and to lead the guilds, who are an association concerned with creating the new social vehicle and new religious mode and guarding and defending the presence of the human factor.

Justin Morrill