

# Development Aid as a Gift of Love: Re-inventing Aid on a Spiritual Foundation

## Pomoc rozwojowa jako dar miłości: oparcie pomocy na duchowości

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### Abstract

Love, when viewed from quantum perspectives, is an outer manifestation of our interconnectedness at the quantum level. As revealed by recent discoveries in neuroscience, it is hardwired in our brain as a need to connect with others, serve others and act for others' well-being. It is empowered to guide our actions only when we grow spiritually. Otherwise, we are mostly driven by self-centeredness, greed and fear soft-wired in the brain. This study points out that development aid is driven, not by love, but by self-centeredness, greed and fear in the minds of elites who control the global economic system. However, evidence show a spiritually developed population is slowly rising and alternative forms of aid driven by love are emerging. This study highlights the significance of re-inventing development aid on a spiritual foundation and presents some necessary policy measures.

**Key words:** love, spirituality, greed, poverty, development aid

### Streszczenie

Miłość, patrząc z perspektywy kwantowej, jest zewnętrzną manifestacją naszej wzajemnej łączności właśnie na poziomie kwantowym. Jak pokazały ostatnie odkrycia neurologiczne, jest wbudowana w nasz mózg jako potrzeba łączenia się z innymi, służenia innym i działania dla dobra innych. Jest uprawniona do kierowania naszymi działaniami tylko wtedy, gdy rozwijamy się duchowo. W przeciwnym wypadku kieruje nami samoświadomość, chciwość i strach. Niestety, obecnie realizowana pomoc rozwojowa jest przeprowadzana nie z uwagi na miłość, ale na samoświadomość, chciwość i strach, które charakteryzują elity kontrolujące globalny system ekonomiczny. Jednocześnie powoli przybywa ludzi rozwijających się duchowo, dzięki którym powstają alternatywne formy pomocy, których podstawą jest miłość. W tej pracy przedstawiamy konieczność transformacji pomocy rozwojowej w taką, która oparta będzie na duchowości, a także omawiamy przykłady niezbędnych działań z zakresu polityki, które należy podjąć.

**Słowa kluczowe:** miłość, duchowość, chciwość, ubóstwo, pomoc rozwojowa

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### Introduction

Despite heavy investments in economic development in low-income countries, poverty, inequality, hunger and malnutrition still plague those countries. There is now a general consensus development has failed to achieve its goals in bringing prosperity, peace and joy to the world. For its failure, while some critiques blame Eurocentrism, injustice and in unequal power relationships in the practice of development (Ferguson, 1990; Rahman, 1993; Amin,

2009; Smith and Max-Neef, 2011), others blame the uncritical transfer of modern science and technologies from rich to poor countries (Peet and Watts, 1993; Escobar, 1995). Ignorance of environmental sustainability in development projects is also mentioned as a reason for the failure (Brudtland, 1989; Reid, 1995; Overton and Scheyvens, 1999; Adams, 2001; Ikerd, 2005). All these views focus only on external factors, assuming the root cause of the failure lies in the external material world. However, there is now a tendency in some circles to look into ourselves

in order to find the root cause of the failure. Korten (1995) and Reid (1995), emphasize the significance of inner changes in achieving development goals. Further emphasizing the significance of inner changes, Ikerd (2005), in his book *Sustainable Capitalism*, points out rules and regulations will not lead to people behaving in a sustainable manner and it should come from their inner selves. *Deep Sustainability*, a concept emerged as an alternative to the external changes-based sustainable paradigm, highlights the significance of altering human relationships with each other and with nature (Ikerd, Gamble, Cox, 2014).

The present author, in his book *Spirituality and Sustainable Development* (2014), recognizes self-centeredness in relationships with our fellow human beings and with nature as the root cause of the failure of development, and highlights the significance of incorporating spirituality – an inner transformation from self-centeredness to selflessness – into development. The present study focuses on development aid, the main source of financing for development, with the intention of exploring how self-centeredness, greed and fear in the mind of donors contribute to the failure of development. Self-centeredness, greed and fear, as shown in this study with the help of recent discoveries in neuroscience and transpersonal psychology, are not intrinsic to human beings; we are intrinsically selfless, altruistic and generous. Our apparent self-centeredness and greed are temporary signs of our spiritual underdevelopment and are replaced by love as we grow spiritually. Evidence show such a spiritual transformation is now unfolding across world. As it unfolds, some spiritually elevated philanthropists donate sizable shares of their wealth to the well-being of the poor. This trend is now identified by some as the *philanthropic revolution* (Schervish, 2007). Some of them want not only to donate money, but also to initiate their own poverty alleviation projects and actively take part in these projects. Parallel to this trend, as will be pointed out later in this study, some spiritually elevated community leaders in poor developing countries initiate spirituality-based community development projects. The emerging spirituality-based alternative aid systems and their development initiatives offer valuable lessons for the existing official aid system and aid-driven development activities. The present study is an attempt to explore this trend and to provide the policy recommendations required to re-invent the existing official aid system on a spiritual foundation.

### **Spirit, Spirituality and Love**

The English word *spirit* has come from the Latin word *spiritus*, which means breath or that which gives life or vitality to a system (Zohar and Marshall, 2005). Spirituality literally means the state of being in unity with spirit. All beings, including ourselves,

are living systems. If spirit is the source of life of all living beings, what we call spirit must be deathless. Is there such a deathless entity within us? In order to find out whether there is, we can look into our body with the help of a powerful microscope. If we do so, we will discover the energy which fills each atom of our body. That energy is deathless. Therefore, spirit is the energy which fills each and every atom of our body. According to quantum physics, the same energy fills the whole universe. In spite of its vastness, this mass field of energy functions as an inseparable and indivisible single field of energy, *a single undivided whole* (Bohn, 1980). According to recent discoveries in quantum physics, *the single undivided whole* is conscious and *can think*. A theoretical physicist, Freeman Dyson, believes this is the *mental component of the universe* (Quoted in: Elgin, 2015). Since the energy is conscious and fills the whole universe, it is called Universal Consciousness.

From the perspective of Universal Consciousness, all living beings and non-living objects in nature are its integral parts. It is an interconnected single entity. The body of any living organism can be taken as an analogy to understand its interconnectedness or oneness. The body consists of various organs and limbs, but all are interconnected and interdependent. No matter how big or small, whatever happens to any one part is instantly felt by the whole body. In the same way, Universal Consciousness feels pains in all beings. Hence, it wishes all beings to be happy, to be healthy, to be peaceful and to be joyous. This is love; pure, universal, unlimited, and unconditional. Recent discoveries in neuroscience reveal Universal Consciousness love is hardwired in our brain. Lieberman (2013), a social neuroscientist, points out our need to connect with others is hardwired in our brain. Pfaff (2007), an American neuroscientist, says the human brain is hardwired to act according to Golden Rule – One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself. In his recent book, *Altruistic Brain: How We are Naturally Good*, Pfaff (2015) demonstrates that human beings are hardwired to behave altruistically and that spontaneous kindness is our default behaviour. The view that spiritual qualities are hardwired in our brain is further supported by the discovery of what neuroscientists call *Mirror Neurons*, which enable us to experience others' pain and be empathetic (Rizzolatti, 2007). From this perspective, love is an outer manifestation of our inner interconnectedness, or oneness at the quantum level. Interconnectedness at the quantum level is expressed through us as a need to connect with others, help others and reduce their pain and suffering, and act for others' well-being. Love manifests itself in various forms such as acceptance, forgiveness, compassion, kindness, tolerance, generosity, sharing, empathy and selfless service. The foundation of love is, not our feelings or emotions towards others, but our inner interconnectedness or oneness with others.

However, most of us do not demonstrate such pure and unconditional love in our ordinary life. Instead, our actions are often driven by self-centeredness, greed and fear. This is because, when we interact with the external world, the brain's neuroplasticity – the ability of the brain to change itself in response to our interactions with the external world – allows these lower qualities prevalent in society to be soft-wired in our brain, preventing us from being guided by the hardwired love. Therefore, we remain spiritually underdeveloped. But the good news is the same neuroplasticity allows us to dissolve the soft-wired lower qualities and to develop spiritually if we want to do so. Research findings in neuroscience reveal we have the capacity to re-wire our brain and change it permanently and transform ourselves (Begley, 2007; Arden, 2010; Newberg and Waldman, 2015). Achieving this inner transformation is known by various names: Self-actualization (Maslow, 1997), Self-realization (Whitmore, 1997) and Enlightenment (Newberg and Waldman, 2015). Such an inner transformation allows us to be guided by the hardwired love. Newberg and Waldman (2015) show how it changes our brain permanently. Their findings suggest most religious and non-religious spiritual practices are potentially capable of leading us toward Enlightenment. Concluding their study, they state that [T]he human brain is primed for Enlightenment. All we need to do to unlock this process is find the right combination of practices, life experiences, and beliefs that will illuminate our path toward Enlightenment. Enlightenment is a gift for all humanity. It is in your body and your brain, and it is waiting to be released in everyone (p. 248).

#### **Official Aid System and Conventional Development: Aid without a Spiritual Foundation**

The origin of the activity we call *development* is often placed in the speech by United States President Henry S. Truman (1945-1953), in which he perceived the poverty in poor nations as a handicap and a threat to the poor as well as to the rich countries (Truman Library, 2016). He used the term 'underdeveloped areas' to describe what later came to be known as *Third World*, *Developing Countries* and *The South*. According to him, the key to prosperity was greater production and the key to greater production was wider application of modern scientific knowledge and technology. The strategy he suggested was to transfer capital, technology and knowledge from rich to poor countries. Then, initiatives were taken by the US-led western countries to invent *development*. Development aid system was subsequently invented in order to provide the capital, technology and knowledge required for economic growth in *underdeveloped areas*. Development aid focused on two goals: (1) Creating markets for the US by reducing poverty and increasing production in developing countries, and (2) Diminishing the threat

of communism by helping countries prosper under capitalism (USAID History 2016).

It was the time when the western capitalist world was facing the challenge of the communist Soviet Union. It was considered important for the US and its western alliance to prevent *underdeveloped areas* from falling into communism. Besides this, fast-growing western industrial economies were in need of more resources and markets for their products. Therefore, it was considered necessary for the western world to keep the 'underdeveloped areas' on their side. As *New Internationalist* (1992) pointed out, *Clothing self-interest in generosity*, Truman outlined a program of technical assistance designed to 'relieve the suffering' of these people through 'industrial activities' and 'a higher standard of living. Concluding their study on donor motives for foreign aid, Bandyopadhyay and Vermann (2013) states:

*As many poorer nations started on their path of development in the postcolonial period, former colonial powers tried to facilitate this process through provision of resources in the form of foreign aid. This motive was central in foreign aid flows throughout the 1960s and still remains one of the multiple objectives that determine aid. In addition to pure altruism, strategic interests have always been relevant. In the Cold War era, aid was used as an instrument to buy allegiance. More recently, aid has focused substantially on security concerns, marked especially by the watershed event of September 2001 (p. 334).*

Thus, the true motive behind development aid seems to be, not love but the self-centeredness, material greed and fear, the fear of losing their control over rest of the world to their perceived enemy – the Soviet Union.

In the official aid system, a small percentage of government income from tax is allocated by policy makers for development aid and is transferred to the poor countries either directly (bilateral aid) or through aid agencies (multilateral aid). This process is administered by a stream of agencies in both donor and recipient countries. In the official aid system, which functions as a bureaucratic mechanism, there is no form of direct contact between the donors – the tax payers in rich countries, and the recipients – the poor people. Therefore, there is hardly any space for love to exchange between the givers and the recipients and grow. In aid-driven conventional development practices, *development* means *to develop others* – the elites at all levels, global, national and local, act collaboratively to develop *others* – the poor. When the elites give aid and develop the poor, if they do not draw from a spiritual basis but rather from a selfish and greedy mindset, they give aid and develop the poor in such a way that it benefits themselves rather than the poor, who are supposed to receive the benefits. Before aid is given and development activity is undertaken, the questions that naturally arise in a

selfish mind are, for example (1) What kind of aid should we give if we are to benefit from it? (2) To what countries should we give aid if we are to benefit from it? (3) In what way are we to develop them if we are to benefit from that development? (4) What development models are we to impose on them if we are to benefit from that development? and (5) What sort of technology are we to introduce to them in aid programmes if we are to benefit from it? When answering these questions from this perspective, the mind will recommend answers which benefit the donors rather than the recipients.

For instance, selfish mindset will propose a kind of aid, recipient countries and development strategies which benefit themselves, which generate demand for their capital, their technologies, their knowledge and their expertise; provides them with easy access to others' resources; popularizes their culture among others which generates demand for their consumer goods and services; links others to their (global) economic system in such a way that a substantial portion of the other's increased income will end up in their hands; make others dependent on them so they can dominate others and get others to deal on their terms when they deal with them, trap others in permanent dependence which provides them with power over them; and destroy the others' local cultures and values which act as a source of resistance to their domination to them. Therefore, not surprisingly, development carried out from those with a selfish mindset benefits the elites and fails to benefit the others, widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

A casual observation of the development policies, strategies and projects commonly adopted in the developing countries supports the above argument. For example:

- Where there is a choice between two recipient countries, the donors choose the country strategically important to them, the country whose leadership is willing to cooperate with them and support their exploitive foreign policies.
- Where there is a choice between the centrally-controlled development and the development controlled by the local people, the donors adopt the former which enables them to exploit the others' resources.
- Where there is a choice between a large-scale development project requiring external resources such as western technologies, knowledge and capital, and a small-scale project which can be managed with locally available resources, they choose the former because it benefits themselves as the people who control the export-import business.
- Where there is a choice between capital-intensive technologies and labour-intensive technologies, they choose the former because it benefits themselves, since they

control the institutions which provide capital, such as banks and various other funding agencies.

- Where there is a choice between a development strategy which adversely affects local cultures and makes local communities dependent on the donors, and a development strategy which strengthens local cultures and makes local communities independent, they choose the former, because it strengthens their power and superiority.

Thus, most aid programmes and aid-driven development projects are designed and implemented in such a way that the resulting development delivers profits for the donors, the powerful who control development rather, than to the powerless poor who are supposed to receive its benefits. Each project induces a variety of changes in the powerless poor; economic changes, socio-cultural changes, and environmental changes. While these changes clearly deliver only positive results to the powerful, they bring a mixture of positive and negative consequences to the powerless. This is because the projects are aimed at raising the production of the powerless, ignoring their possible social, cultural and environmental consequences, or assuming there are no such negative consequences. The powerful provide aid and loans for development and design the projects. They do it in such a way that if the development generates wealth for the poor, a substantial portion of the increased wealth is transferred into the hands of the powerful. As Venkataraman (2010) puts it *At the macro level, wealth generation is never altruistic and invariably involves exploitation of various kinds, some very evident and others not so evident and happening via an invisible chain* (p. 17). The evidence provided in this section with regard to donors' the motives and how the official aid system operates suggest development aid is not a gift of love, but a product of self-centeredness, greed and fear in the mindset of the global elites.

### Spiritual Revolution and Growing Generosity

There is a growing consensus among academics, philosophers and intellectuals that an inner transformation, or a kind of spiritual awakening, is unfolding across the world. Brian L Weiss, a psychiatrist, a bestselling author and a spiritual teacher in the US is convinced a spiritual revolution is occurring. In his *Mirrors of Time* published in 2002 he states that

*A spiritual revolution is occurring. It seems to me that people who read my books, attend to my lectures, or write to me are trying to do far more than solve mere physical and emotional problems. They are seeking a pathway to endow their lives with more meaning, fulfilment, and joy, and they are transcending the mundane* (p. 72).

Similarly, Tacey (2004) in his book *Spirituality Revolution: The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality* identified a new trend emerging across the western world, what he called a spirituality revolution. The spirituality revolution is

*a spontaneous movement in society, a new interest in the reality of spirit and its healing effect on life, health, community and well-being. It is our secular society realizing that it has been running on empty, and has to restore itself at a deep primal source, a source which is beyond humanity and yet paradoxically at the very core of our experience* (p. 1).

In his book, he recognized the growing interest in spirituality among students and youth. There is a trend that suggests they have withdrawn themselves from traditional religious institutions but have engaged themselves in exploring spirituality and the meaning of life. In order to explore this, they are beginning to move beyond the narrow confines of any one religion and orthodoxy. Tolle (2005), an internationally renowned spiritual writer and speaker, in *A New Earth: Create a Better World* called it the transformation of human consciousness, and predicts that

*A significant portion of the Earth's population will soon recognize, if they haven't already done so, that humanity is now faced with a stark choice: Evolve or die. A still relatively small but rapidly growing percentage of humanity is already experiencing within themselves the breakup of the old egoic mind pattern and the emergence of a new dimension of consciousness* (p. 21).

It is evident that altruism, which is a sign of emerging spirituality, is growing and the population of altruists is rising. It has been found altruists make up about 15 percent of western populations (Cited in: Ricard, 2011, p. 206-207). It can be believed altruists will grow in number in the future. Because, if altruists live in isolation they will soon diminish, whereas if they live together in groups, they will further evolve. What could happen in the modern interconnected world is that altruists would get in touch with each other and act collaboratively for the well-being of the humanity. Evidence suggests the number of organizations involved in collecting charity and the amount of wealth they collect are on the rise. The rich class is now beginning to find that giving is more satisfying than accumulation and consumption. For instance, Schervish (2007), a researcher on philanthropy, has revealed that the share of wealth given for charity by philanthropists in the US increases as the wealth is transferred from the old to the younger generation. *Giving USA 2015*, a report of the Giving USA Foundation, noticed an upward trend in donations for charity (Giving USA, 2015). According to the report, the amount given by Americans in 2014 is 7.1 percent higher than that in 2013 – the fifth year in row where giving went up. *Chronicle of Philanthropy* (2014) noticed a significant increase of giving

among poor and middle class Americans. A similar trend has been recognized in the United Kingdom by the Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy (CGAP, 2011). A positive growth in charitable regular giving in UK has been noticed by the charity sector's annual benchmark report for charity direct debit donations. The 2011 report states that despite the recession, *charitable giving is proving robust with growth that demonstrates the generosity of the British people and the resilience of the charity sector* (*The Guardian*, 2011). In recent years, private philanthropic foundations have emerged in rich societies as a potentially effective force in the fight against poverty, with their financial contribution to poverty alleviation substantially higher than that of official aid. The Hudson Institute (2013) revealed how private financial flows have surpassed official aid, how new forms of giving are redefining foreign aid and development and how the philanthropic movement is spreading from rich western countries to emerging economies such as China, Russia, India, and Brazil. Kinsman (1990) quotes a news report based on Britain's Charity Commissioner's report, which identified not only the growing generosity among the public in donating to charities, but also the new trend of getting involved in service activities.

*Last year Britain's charities collected a record three million pounds in donations from the public, over 10% more than ever before. The annual report of the Charity Commissioner emphasizes the trend towards personal commitment in charitable concerns. 'Just signing a cheque is not enough', says the report's introduction, 'people want to get involved as well'* (Cited in: Whitmore, 1997, p. 171).

John Low, chief executive of the Charities Aid Foundation said *UK giving is now bigger and better, looking far beyond the financial side of being charitable to explore the who, what, how and why of our support for charities across the country* (EFC, 2016). The growing interest in getting involved in voluntary work has been identified as a common trend in rich societies. A study in the US found volunteering continues to rise in momentum and impact (*Examiner*, 2014). BBC recently reported a dramatic rise in volunteering among youths across the UK (BBC, 2016). Numerous studies have found most volunteers feel better or healthier after helping out (Howlett, 2004). People want to make use of their free time for some life-fulfilling activity, and they find that making themselves available for alleviating others' suffering is most fulfilling. A trend of volunteering to work in poor societies for the benefit of the poor has also been noticed in rich societies.

### Emerging Spirituality-Based Alternatives

As the aid and development programmes without a spiritual base fail, spiritually evolved people and

their organizations driven by love begin to take their own initiatives. They begin to act in cooperation with the poor in order to reduce their suffering. Cooperation is emerging between the spiritually evolved rich people and the poor. Initial signs of this cooperation are now clearly visible. At first, the cooperation appears to take the form of donations to charities and then it develops to direct involvement in service projects. As already pointed out, the number of charities and the amount of money collected by them are on the rise and the interest in getting involved in voluntary work is growing. While some join international development agencies and non-government organizations as volunteers, other like-minded individuals form their own small organizations to help the poor. Still others prefer to serve a few handpicked poor families individually. Such people establish close personal relationships with the selected families and help them regularly according to their needs and priorities. Some other individuals help through local non-government organizations of poor communities.

It has been evident religious institutions in rich societies are increasingly involved in various forms of poverty alleviation. As Whitmore (1997) noted, Christian-based charitable outreach to the poor, the needy and oppressed is world-wide and is a significant manifestation of cooperation with humanity at large. Other religions, sects and even individual churches each have their forms of humanitarian cooperation. Involvement of mosques and churches in helping the poor is quite common. In a way, such religious institutions act as mediators that facilitate cooperation between the rich and the poor. Some rural development projects initiated and coordinated by religious institutions have been reported to be highly successful. For instance, Suksamran (1988) provides evidence of the success of local-level development initiatives taken by Buddhist monks in Thailand; and Scheyvens (1993) highlights successful development initiatives taken by local church women's groups in the Solomon Islands. *Swadhyaya* and *Manavodya* are two grassroots movements in India involved in small-scale rural development projects. Both have emphasized the importance of spirituality in linking inner transformation to community well-being. As pointed out by Wilson (1996) and Vidyarthi and Wilson (2008) the *Swadhyaya* is based on the belief that God is within each person and one must discover God within in order to be empowered. Acting on this basis, the *Swadhyaya* has generated great material wealth with no external assistance. *Manavodya* is based on self-awakening, self-discipline, love and awareness of the unity of all life.

Large projects of this kind have also been reported in India. For example, the International Sathya Sai Service Organization (ISSSO) is a spiritual organization inspired by a renowned spiritual teacher, Sathya Sai Baba, who attracts both the rich and the poor (Satyasai, 2014). The ISSSO, with the financial

contribution of the devotees of Sathya Sai Baba, has completed a number of large-scale development projects for the benefit of the poor. A few of them are: (1) Sathya Sai Water Project, a large-scale project which provides drinking water to five million families in the Chennai District of South India; (2) Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospitals, two large super speciality hospitals equipped with all modern facilities, which provide specialist treatment free of charge; and (3) Sathya Sai Universities, three recognized university campuses which providing undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in general subjects free of charge. All these projects are financed by donations, mainly from the devotees from rich western countries. Apart from these large-scale service projects, the ISSSO regularly conducts small-scale rural development projects under its *Grama Seva* programme. This programme involves short-term as well as long-term projects. Under this programme, devotees who belong to the rich and middle classes, including overseas visitors, visit selected poor villages and undertake various service activities such as providing basic necessities including food, and healthcare, helping the poor with some material they need for their livelihood, helping them with labour and equipment for household and income-generating activities. There are Sathya Sai Service Organizations in 180 countries and each has a service wing which facilitates cooperation between the rich and the poor in order to promote the well-being of the poor.

### **Re-Inventing Development Aid on a Spiritual Foundation**

Unlike the official aid-system which has been deliberately designed by some elites and professionals backed by elites with self-centred hidden agendas in mind, the above discussed spirituality-based alternatives are a natural response to the growing love, compassion and empathy in the human mind. They can be seen as an offshoot of the unfolding spiritual revolution, the next step of human evolution. Unlike the official aid system, in this alternative aid system, donors are motivated, not by self-centeredness, greed and fear, but by love which is unconditional and selfless. Therefore, they do not have any hidden agenda. All they want is to ensure the well-being of recipients. In the alternative aid system, there is a direct contact between the donors and the recipients. Therefore, there is a reasonably adequate space for love to exchange and grow between the two parties and it contributes to spiritual growth of both parties. Therefore, donors are in a better position to offer what the recipients really need to alleviate their suffering. Both parties are able to work in a spirit of trust, candid communication and transparency, which are manifestations of selfless love. Furthermore, both parties are able to learn from each other's experience to develop meaningful strategies.

When re-invented, the official aid system should not be based on the old assumptions listed below which are not aligned with the principles of spirituality.

- Development means material growth, and material growth alone can alleviate poverty and bring happiness and well-being to the world.
- Development can be achieved by changing the world externally; physical and institutional infrastructural changes, technological advances, social reforms, and advances in knowledge and skills.
- There is only one form of happiness; sensual pleasure. To experience pleasure, people need material wealth. Hence, material wealth is the only source of happiness. So, the wealthier are happier.
- Self-centeredness and greed are justified as motives for economic growth.
- Self-centeredness and greed are genetically fixed and permanent, intrinsic characteristics of the human race. Hence, trying to change these inner characteristics by spiritual means is unwise.
- What matters, is the flow of material resources from the donor to the poor. Establishing a loving relationship between the donor and the recipient is not important.

It is evident all these assumptions are wrong. It is widely accepted that development is not synonymous with economic growth, and growth should accompany equality, clean and healthy environment, peace and happiness. This goal cannot be achieved only by external changes. The external changes economic growth brings generate more material wealth, but as the self-centeredness and greed within us remain unchanged, we fail to generate wealth in an environmentally friendly manner and to distribute the wealth equally. The world is now witnessing the consequences of trying to achieve development goals solely by external changes. As it has been pointed out with the help of empirical evidence, the root cause of widespread poverty lies within us and it is our self-centeredness and greed (Ulluwishewa, 2014). Both conventional development and official aid systems ignore this truth and attempt to change almost everything in the external world except ourselves. All great religions advocate reduction of self-centeredness and greed for material wealth, and modern scientific discoveries suggest that self-centeredness and greed are temporary signs of our spiritual underdevelopment. As we grow spiritually these characteristics are replaced by selfless love, altruism and generosity.

Without achieving these inner changes in mankind, conventional development also fails to deliver happiness to all. It is now evident material wealth does not necessarily give happiness. Material wealth is re-

quired to meet the poor's basic needs and thereby to alleviate their suffering. But as recent findings of research on happiness and economic growth suggest, its capacity to generate happiness will fade as one's income increases (Layard, 2005; Frey, 2008). Furthermore, contrary to the widely held belief sensual pleasure is the only one form of happiness, it is now clear there is another form of happiness. This is the kind of happiness we experience when our mind is calm, pure, peaceful, un-aroused and in a state of contentment; or in other words, when we become one with the spirit which is our inner reality. Hence, it is called *spiritual happiness*. We can also experience spiritual happiness through loving relationships with others and with nature. We have inherited this by birth and it always remains deep within. This view is supported by scientific evidence in neuroscience, transpersonal psychology and scientific studies on near-death experience (Ulluwishewa, 2015, 2016). All great religions want us to seek spiritual happiness. As we develop spiritually, we begin to seek spiritual happiness instead of sensual pleasure. When it is re-invented, the official aid system should be based on these scientifically proven spiritual values.

It is suggested here that poverty alleviation be viewed as a means to an end; not as an end in itself as it is viewed in the existing official aid system. The end should be spiritual growth in all parties and all individuals involved in the aid system, including donors, aid administrators, the grass-root level aid workers and the poor. Spiritual growth in all those involved will enhance the effectiveness of aid as well as the long-term sustainability of the projects. It has been pointed out with the help of empirical evidence that as people grow spiritually, they grow in love, compassion, honesty, integrity, transparency, and commitment to work – the qualities crucially important for the success of aid programs. Gopalakrishna (2006), with the help of empirical evidence, points out how *Vipassana* meditation improves personal effectiveness, interpersonal effectiveness and professional effectiveness of managers and employees. Van Eijk (1999), a professional development consultant, points out how the practice of transcendental meditation could enhance the professional capacity of development workers. On the other hand, as it has been evident in spiritually oriented community development projects, the success of such projects and the spiritual qualities demonstrated by the individuals involved in them would inspire many others to support the projects in variety of ways (Wilson, 1996; Vidyarthi and Wilson, 2008). This is confirmed by a decade of experience of the author with spiritually oriented small service projects. Thus, seeing economic growth, not as an end in itself, but as means to an end, which is spiritual growth, can make aid programs self-sustaining and more effective.

It is useful to offer spiritual training programs along with the conventional training provided for aid workers and project-beneficiaries. Such spiritual training can significantly increase the capacity of aid programmes to contribute to the already unfolding spiritual revolution. Spiritual training programs can be based on religious as well as science-based non-religious spiritual practices such as psycho-spiritual therapy, meditation, past-life regression therapy, hypnotic therapy, music therapy, and spiritually oriented sports and recreational activities. Spiritually oriented service activities have been proved to be very effective in reducing self-centeredness and greed. Such service activities can be interpreted as *love-in-action* and are already in place in many religious institutions. They are also practiced in some spiritually oriented community development projects. Service, in this context, contributes to the spiritual growth of those who serve while rendering material benefits to those who are served. When the projects are monitored and evaluated, attention should also be given to their contribution to the spiritual growth of all parties involved. Parallel to conventional Environmental Impact Assessment, a Spiritual Impact Assessment is necessary to assess the possible spiritual impacts of proposed projects and to suggest measures to mitigate their negative impacts on people's spiritual growth. When professionals and aid workers are recruited for aid programs, as well as their professional qualifications and experiences, their level of spiritual attainment, their adherence to spiritual values such as love and compassion should also be taken into account. The same should be used as criteria when their performances are assessed.

### Conclusion

The world has changed since the emergence of official development aid and the invention of aid agencies. Apart from the tangible changes in socio-economic, political and environmental arenas, some intangible inner changes have also occurred. This paper focussed on an inner change, the growing altruism, compassion and generosity evident in some sectors of humanity, which offers beneficial effects on aid. However, the existing official aid system is not a product of love, the pinnacle of spiritual growth, but of self-centeredness, greed and fear which are symptoms of spiritual underdevelopment. Hence, it fails to meet the need of spiritually developed people to connect with others, serve others and act for others' well-being. To do so, alternative aid systems are emerging. Evidence show that alternatives often succeed in meeting the real needs of the poor, and reveal the significance of re-inventing the official aid system on a spiritual foundation.

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