

Peacebuilding in its Most Compassionate Form

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The Interfaith Peacebuilding and Community Revitalization (IPCR) Initiative
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A Note from the Writer of This Essay

“Peacebuilding in its Most Compassionate Form” is the document which best represents The IPCR Initiative as a whole—and the one document this writer would recommend as a starting point for people who wish to discover for themselves what The IPCR Initiative is, and what it has to offer. The following “Table of Contents” is provided as a quick way of accessing the particular elements of this essay:

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Introduction

In Appendix 1 of this essay, there is a ten point assessment of the most difficult challenges of our times.^{1,2} Such an assessment of the challenges of our times has compelled this writer to the conclusion that there is a profound and critical need for human beings—collectively—to be

- 1) much more organized and deliberate about “... bringing to the fore what is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help, as well as to those who receive it.”
- 2) much more multifaceted and participation-friendly in our approaches to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability
- 3) much more resourceful in the use of the storehouses of accumulated wisdom and “embodied energy”³ which are now accessible to us.

There has never been a time in the course of history when both the capacity to cultivate practical wisdom and the capacity to build a positive and constructive consensus were as important as they are now. The complexity associated with building bridges and increasing collaboration between diverse communities of people, the urgent need for resolution of a significant number of issues in the near future—and *the seemingly chronic nature of many of the challenges of our times*—suggest a need for problem solving on a scale most of us have never known before.

This writer is the founder and outreach coordinator for The Interfaith Peacebuilding and Community Revitalization (IPCR) Initiative. The IPCR Initiative is now offering a document titled—“A Project Proposal for ‘Towards Higher Common Ground’: A Survey of Most Difficult Challenges and Most Valuable Resources”—which advocates that communities and regions should undertake such surveys, so that public discourse on what our most difficult challenges are, and what our most valuable resources are, is sufficiently relevant and constructive. The actual survey (as proposed) would consist of the following four questions:

- 1) What are the most difficult challenges of our times?
- 2) Do we have the resources necessary to overcome the challenges of our times?
- 3) If your answer to Question #2 is yes, please describe the resources you believe will contribute the most to helping us—collectively—overcome these difficult challenges.
- 4) If your answer to Question #2 is no, please offer any and all sincere, constructive, relevant, and practical suggestions for what we—collectively—can do to inspire, encourage, and/or create the resources you believe *would be necessary* to overcome these difficult challenges.

The survey proposal itself provides:

- 1) an overview of evidence which contributed to this writers sense that there is a need for a survey like this
- 2) many examples of what responses to such a survey might look like, as an indication of how useful such a survey could be.

Well-organized efforts to identify problems and brainstorm solutions are a universally recognized approach to problem solving which is commonly used in family, community, business, and government settings in every part of the world. Such efforts would surely increase participants' awareness of the storehouses of accumulated wisdom which are our heritage from the past, *and* the significant numbers of people who are *currently* accumulating valuable experience and establishing constructive understandings relevant to overcoming the challenges of our times.

Unfortunately, there are many important initiatives which are critical to overcoming the challenges of our times, but which are not quite "coming through the mist as much as they should be".

As supporting evidence for the above statement, consider the following two questions:

- 1) *In your opinion, how many people—at this particular point in time—have a realistic understanding of the depth and range of the challenges of our times?*
- 2) *In your opinion, what percentage of the people now living on this planet will overcome such challenges as are stated in Appendix 1, and arrive at a point of time in the future which represents a positive outcome?*

This writers' conclusion: we are going to need many more new approaches to problem solving, and many more new initiatives, if we are to be successful in overcoming the challenges of our times.

What can we do—*at this particular point in time—in the everyday circumstances of our lives*—to bring the best ideas *from* the storehouses of accumulated wisdom now accessible to us and "*through the mist*", so that our community building processes will be most effective in helping us overcome the challenges of our times?

In the best of times, even the most profound challenges can be overcome; for in the best of times, _____ is/are nurtured, supported, and sustained by family, friends, teachers, mentors, elders, and the everyday influences of community life and cultural traditions.

This essay, "Peacebuilding in its Most Compassionate Form", is an effort to assist fellow human beings in identifying what—from the storehouses of accumulated wisdom now accessible to us—would best answer the above question "What can we do..."—and what—from the storehouses of accumulated wisdom now accessible to us—would best fill in the blank in the above statement.

Something We Should Attend To With Much Care

Arriving at the belief that a positive outcome is possible is an important step towards actually achieving a positive outcome, and a step which needs to be attended to with much care, to encourage practical and constructive public discourse. One way of attending to this step in our current circumstances would be to "... bring to the fore what

is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help, as well as to those who receive it"... or, in other words, increase our collective awareness of the significant numbers of people who are currently accumulating valuable experience and establishing constructive understandings relevant to overcoming the challenges of our times.

The following three pages are offered as:

- 1) sufficient evidence for the belief that *it is possible* for our efforts to overcome the challenges of our times to *actually achieve a positive outcome*.
- 2) the beginning of a series of discussion points which will contribute to the realizing the goals of this essay

We Have the Resources Necessary to Overcome the Challenges of Our Times

There are a number of core beliefs which have contributed to the development of The IPCR Initiative. Here are three examples:

- 1) As a result of the unprecedented opportunities created by the expansion of the Internet, we have now arrived at a very auspicious moment in time... for at no other time in the course of history has so many people had access to so much in the way of time-tested guidelines, inspiring role models, and service-oriented initiatives.
- 2) Even now, as you are reading this, truly inspiring contributions of genuine goodwill are being generated in a variety of ways—and in a variety of circumstances— by countless numbers of people in communities around the world.
- 3) There are countless numbers of ‘things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives’ which will contribute to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts, in their own communities and regions—and in other parts of the world.

And here—in the context of this essay “Peacebuilding in its Most Compassionate Form”—is a sample of evidence in support of the three above mentioned IPCR core beliefs:

- a) A List of 105 Related Fields of Activity [which are in some way—or which are in many ways—related to the goals listed in The IPCR Mission Statement (The IPCR Mission Statement is included in this essay; see p. 6)]

accountability indicators, alleviating hunger, alleviating poverty, alternative gifts, appropriate technology, barter networks, biodynamic agriculture, building civic skills, building community, car-free zones, character education, citizen participation, citizen peacebuilding, co-housing, community banks, community development, community economics, community gardens, community good news networks, community journals, community land trusts, community membership agreements, community revitalization, community revolving loans, community self-awareness, community service work, community supported agriculture, community supported manufacturing, community visioning initiatives, consensus decision making, cottage industries, creative commons, cultural diversity, development assistance, disease control, eco-classifieds,

ecological architecture, ecological footprint analysis, ecological tipping points, economic conversion, edible schoolyards, emergency humanitarian aid, emergency medical assistance, energy conservation, energy descent pathways, energy farms, fair trade, faith-based educational institutions, faith mentoring, farmers markets, food co-ops, green living, green politics, green purchasing, green retrofitting, holistic health care, homesteading, identifying problems and solutions, inclusive decision-making processes, individual spiritual formation, inspiring role models, interfaith dialogue, interfaith peacebuilding, intergenerational projects, local community points of entry, local currency, locally based food processing, locally grown organic food, low impact transport systems, medical assistance, meditation, mentoring, neighborhood revitalization, non-profit human service organizations, non-violent conflict resolution, oil depletion protocol, peace studies programs, peak oil, permaculture, positive news, powerdown projects, preventative health care, questionnaire construction, recycling, relocalization, renewable resources, right livelihood, right livelihood employment listings, rural renaissance, socially engaged spirituality, socially responsible investing, solutions journalism, spiritual discipline, spiritual diversity, spiritual friendships, spiritually responsible investing, sustainable health care, vegetarian nutrition, village design, village industries, violence prevention, voluntary simplicity, water conservation, win-win conflict resolution, world population awareness, yoga, zero waste, etc.

b) The following list of service-oriented initiatives simply represents some of the initiatives this writer personally thinks of as especially inspiring, and as such represents only a small fraction of the many initiatives which might be recognized by the members of any particular faith community—or by residents of any diverse regional area. [Note: The inclusion of these initiatives, in the context of this essay—and in the context of any material associated with The IPCR Initiative—does not suggest or imply any endorsement or support by these initiatives for The IPCR Initiative.]

1. Alternative Gifts International
2. The Beyond Intractability Knowledge Base Project
3. Big Brothers, Big Sisters
4. Bread for the World
5. Camphill Communities
6. Catholic Relief Services
7. Center for Disease Control and Prevention
8. Co-op America
9. Countryside and Small Stock Journal
10. Crystal Waters Permaculture Village
11. Doctors without Borders
12. EcoVillage at Ithaca
13. EcoVillage Training Center at The Farm
14. EcoVillage Training through The Findhorn Foundation
15. Global Ecovillage Network
16. Greater DC Cares
17. Green Books
18. Habitat for Humanity
19. Heifer International
20. Human Rights Watch
21. The Hunger Site
22. Interfaith Youth Core
23. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
24. New Society Publishers

25. Oxfam International
26. Peace Corps
27. The Permaculture Activist
28. Post Carbon Institute
29. Powerdown Projects (New College of California)
30. Religions for Peace
31. Right Livelihood Awards
32. Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement
33. Transition Culture
34. Un-Habitat (UN Human Settlements Program)
35. Worldwatch Institute
36. World Food Programme
37. World Health Organization

c) “In the Greater Washington D.C. area (USA), there are

approximately 2,400 places of worship
 well over 1,200 non-profit human service organizations (with services ranging
 from food and clothing supplies for needy, homeless shelters, alcohol and drug
 abuse rehabilitation, healthcare, employment assistance, etc.)
 well over 1,000 civic associations and advisory neighborhood commissions
 over 1,000 public and private schools
 over 350 continuing care retirement communities, independent living retirement
 communities, assisted living/group homes, nursing care facilities and home
 health care agencies for elders
 over 200 men’s and women’s service clubs
 over 125 fire departments and rescue squads
 over 50 hospitals
 over 50 central and district police stations
 over 50 universities, community colleges and theological seminaries
 over 30 boys and girls clubs
 a multitude of businesses large and small
 and many, many local, state, and federal government offices and agencies
 (from a database compiled in 1996 by this writer)

d) The cross country torch relay for the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia (USA) began April 27 in Los Angeles and ended July 19 in Atlanta. Of the approximately 10,000 torch-carriers, about 5,000 were “community heroes selected by local United Way panels based on nominating essays.” Thirty-seven of the eighty-five torch-carriers in the Greater Washington D.C. area were “community heroes.” A graphic—in the newspaper article referenced for this information—listed all thirty-seven “community heroes.” (see the Washington Post on June 13, 1996) What follows are some of the brief descriptions, included in that graphic, of those “community heroes”:

“who does volunteer work with the elderly”; “who is active in the Big Brother program in the District”; “who does volunteer work with AIDS patients and people infected with HIV”; “who does volunteer work at hospitals”; “who is active in literacy programs for children”; “who does a range of neighborhood volunteer work”; “who helps abandoned,

orphaned and disabled children”; “who does volunteer work with children and elderly in poor neighborhoods”⁴

Seeing Good... and Seeing Potential for More Good

As commentary on the extensive evidence cited above, this writer would like to suggest that it is because of a particularly wide range in his capacity to see good in the efforts of people from many different faith communities and cultural traditions, that the above evidence can be brought together in one place. He would also like to suggest that the same wide range in his capacity to see good is why he sees so much potential for more good. This capacity to see good, and to see potential for more good, is a result of this writer’s “world view”—the way he “understands (and interprets) his experiences, and makes judgments about what is valuable and important”.⁵

Much of The IPCR Initiative consists of concepts and tools which have been developed because this writer believes there is both the need—and the potential—for people in communities around the world to be much more resourceful in the use of the storehouses of accumulated wisdom and “embodied energy” which are now accessible to us.

From this point of view—a wide-ranging capacity to see good, and to see much potential for more good—it will be useful to look at The IPCR Mission Statement, a few of the difficulties in realizing the goals listed in that statement, and what the IPCR Initiative offers as ways of overcoming those difficulties.

The IPCR Mission Statement

The Interfaith Peacebuilding and Community Revitalization (IPCR) Initiative is an effort to facilitate the practical application of the Eight IPCR Concepts (“Community Good News Networks,” “Community Faith Mentoring Networks,” “Spiritual Friendships,” “Questionnaires That Help Build Caring Communities,” “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace,” “Spiritually Responsible Investing,” “Ecological Sustainability,” and “IPCR Journal/Newsletters”)—at the community and regional level—as a way of contributing to the following goals:

- 1) “... bringing to the fore what is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help as well as to those who receive it.”
- 2) increasing our collective capacity to encourage and inspire individual spiritual formation—with all the beneficial consequences that follow for individuals, communities, regions. etc.
- 3) building trust among people from different faith communities and cultural traditions
- 4) increasing our capacity to be responsible stewards of our time, energy, and money
- 5) increasing our capacity to access what is necessary for basic human needs and quality of life through principles and practices of ecological sustainability and permaculture, especially in light of the implications of global warming, ecological footprint analysis, and the “peaking” of our finite supplies of oil

- 6) increasing our awareness of the countless number of ‘things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives’ which will contribute to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts, in our own communities and regions—and in other parts of the world
- 7) reducing the incidence of violence—and all the costs associated with war
- 8) increasing emergency assistance to people with basic human needs
- 9) reflecting an understanding of the value of silence
- 10) creating local community and regional publications that provide a format for sharing the good news which would be identified, encouraged, supported, and sustained by contributions to the first 9 goals

Some Questions We Will Need to Answer

This writer believes it is fair to suggest that the ten goals listed in The IPCR Mission Statement (above) can be advanced in many ways with contributions of time, energy, and money by people from many different faith communities and cultural traditions. However, as many of us know by the experiences of our lives, there are many difficult challenges associated with advancing these goals. One particularly difficult challenge—which is designated by The IPCR Initiative as a “most difficult challenge of our time” (and which is part of a ten point assessment of “the most difficult challenges of our times” used in many IPCR documents, and included in Appendix 1)—is described as follows:

“The source of threats—whether perceived or real—to the identities and/or cherished meanings of many communities of people is too often linked to religious, spiritual, and/or moral traditions; and such threats too often result in conflicts which cast a shadow of negative associations onto such traditions. These negative associations have caused many people to disassociate from the religious, spiritual, and/or moral traditions linked to such threats; and have accumulated to such a degree that the real treasured wisdom of many such traditions now seems as if it is hidden—or remains undiscovered. This is unfortunate—as such treasured wisdom contains teachings which inspire and encourage people to

- 1) place a high priority on the development of truth, virtue, love, and peace—and live disciplined lives for the purpose of adhering to truth, cultivating virtue and love, and maintaining the pathways to enduring peace
- 2) sacrifice personal desires for the greater good of the whole
- 3) find contentment and quality of life while consuming less material goods and ecological services
- 4) prefer peacebuilding which supports and actualizes mutually beneficial understandings, forgiveness, and reconciliation—and which abstains from violent conflict resolution—as a way of bringing cycles of violence to an end
- 5) use resources carefully, so that there is surplus available for emergency assistance
- 6) support community life and cultural traditions which ‘... bring to the fore what is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help, as well as to those who receive it.’”

What is it that happens, in the everyday influences of community life and cultural traditions, which causes such treasured wisdom to be overshadowed by threats, violent

conflicts, and other experiences with negative associations? What could happen instead, in the everyday influences of community life and cultural traditions, which would cause threats, violent conflicts, and other experiences with negative associations to be overshadowed by the treasured wisdom described above? Which basic elements of community life and cultural traditions lead to cycles of mutually beneficial understandings, and which lead to cycles of violence? If we are to overcome the challenges of our times, a majority of people on this planet will need to know the answers to these questions.

About “Frameworks”, Infrastructures, Community Life, and Cultural Traditions

This writer believes that having a better understanding of the cause/effect relationships between “frameworks” (as described below), infrastructures, community life, and cultural traditions will assist us in moving towards answers to the above questions. After offering the following five propositions, this writer will provide commentary which, hopefully, will help clarify these important cause/effect relationships.

1) As young children grow into adults, the everyday circumstances of community life and cultural traditions provide “frameworks” by which they “understand their experiences and make judgments about what is valuable and important”. These “frameworks” shape the way people come into contact with each other, and the way they interpret facts, issues, and events—and provide the context by which people decide what are appropriate responses to the circumstances of their lives. These “frameworks” are often the source of a person’s thoughts about who they are, how they feel about themselves, how they evaluate other peoples “frameworks”, and how other people might evaluate their “framework”.⁶

2) “Real education must be judged by the concern for others which it promotes.”⁷

3) “Intractable conflict usually involves some threat—perceived or real—to (a person’s) identity, or cherished meanings, or both.”⁸

4) There are now significant occurrences of conflict in the world which are a result of people feeling that there is “some threat—perceived or real—to their identity, or cherished meanings, or both.”⁸

5) And there are now many people whose life circumstances—whether perceived or real—*seem* so difficult that they interpret threats, such as described above, as threats to their very existence. In such circumstances, many people come to the conclusion that it is necessary to resort to violence—to either save their lives, or to sacrifice their lives in a way that affirms the “framework” which gave their life meaning.

Again: what is it that happens, in the everyday influences of community life and cultural traditions, which causes such treasured wisdom (as described above, see p. 7) to be overshadowed by threats, violent conflicts, and other experiences with negative associations? Part of what happens is people interpret circumstances as threats (whether perceived or real)—and whole infrastructures are created, supported, and sustained as a way of preventing the perceived-or-real threat from having a negative impact on their identities, their cherished meanings—or their very lives. Unfortunately, a possible side effect of this kind of “action-reaction” cycle is that too much time, energy, and money

can be invested in creating, supporting, and sustaining “defensive” infrastructures. And when too much time, energy, and money are invested in “defensive” infrastructures... what happens to ideas associated with reducing the possibility of perceiving threats in the first place by creating, supporting, and sustaining whole infrastructures associated with peacebuilding, reconciliation, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability? Such ideas are overshadowed, and receive less attention, and less support. This writer believes, as stated in the introduction to this essay, that there has never been a time in the course of history when both the capacity to cultivate practical wisdom and the capacity to build a positive and constructive consensus were as important as they are now. *Are we up to the challenge?*

A Critical Point in the Evolution of Spiritual Understanding

The IPCR Initiative believes that any initiative hoping to build bridges and increase collaboration along the lines of individual spiritual formation and interfaith peacebuilding must offer well-organized, peaceful, constructive, and ongoing community building processes, which result in the accumulation of more and more opportunities for people to practice spiritual wisdom in the everyday circumstances of community life. But how will it be possible to do this when even the most gentle and kindhearted people of one religious tradition are perceived as a “threat” to the identity or cherished meanings of another religious tradition? That we must somehow work through *all of the challenges* in Appendix 1 (including the one described above, see p. 7) is a very sobering realization—and one of a few key realizations which has convinced this writer that we are at a critical point in the evolution of spiritual understanding.

And yet arriving at a full appreciation of the difficulty of our current circumstances is both difficult and risky, as arriving at such a point *without also having* sufficient faith and wisdom—and access to appropriate resources—could be overwhelming, and could lead to many people losing hope and becoming desperate. After all, consider that in one of the documents which has assisted many people to a fuller awareness of the implications of “peak oil” (the “Hirsch Report”), the suggestion is made that successful risk management of such a profound change in human affairs will require that large scale mitigation activity commence ten years before the actual “peak” occurs.⁹

How much more time, might we imagine, will be needed for the profound changes in human affairs necessary to overcome all the challenges described in Appendix 1? Who can we turn to to assure us that we—collectively— will avoid an outcome in which many people learn of the challenges of our times in a way which leads to a loss of hope and feelings of desperation? How can we—collectively—arrive at a point where a significant majority of the people currently living on this planet have sufficient faith and wisdom—and access to appropriate resources—to make genuine contributions towards overcoming the challenges of our times? This writer believes—and hopes many other people share this belief—that if we are to overcome the challenges of our times we will need not only the resources which innovators can prove the existence of by scientific method; we will also need the resources which people of faith believe exist as a result of inner experience.

As an example of this point of view, consider the following: one proposition of The IPCR Initiative is that—for the current generation to overcome the challenges of our times—each person will need to do his or her part, and *trust that the others involved will do their part*. To repeat: *each person will need to do his or her part, and trust that the others involved will do their part*. From the point of view of this writer, one of the “others” involved is the source and origin (with such names as have been ascribed to it) of all the spiritual gifts necessary to nurture, support, and sustain a peaceful and happy way of life. *Do we believe that the source and origin of all things is doing its part? Are we really doing our part? When the going gets difficult in our personal lives, will we have enough faith to continue to do our part? And will we have enough wisdom to understand that it is just as important for others to maintain their faith, as it is for us to maintain ours? How will we be able to trust others, and others be able to trust us, if each of us sees our different pathways to wisdom as a threat, instead of a discovery from which we all might benefit?*

We are at a critical point in the evolution of spiritual understanding. Fortunately, there is much potential which could be translated into a positive outcome. Another way of saying this is: *at no other time in the course of history have so many people had access to so much along the lines of resources necessary to overcoming the challenges of their times. We have the resources necessary to overcome the challenges of our times. And whether we know it or not, there are many people who are actively involved in translating the potential energy now accessible to us into positive and constructive initiatives... many people who are already on the pathways to resolving many of the challenges in Appendix 1. Unfortunately, there are still many initiatives critical to overcoming the challenges of our times which are not quite “coming through the mist as much as they should be”... too many “frameworks” and infrastructures which have been developed as a reaction to violence, or the threat of violence, and not enough “frameworks” and infrastructures which have been developed along the lines of peacebuilding, reconciliation, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability.*

This writer believes that there is now a profound and critical need for as many people as possible to exercise as much love, understanding, and forgiveness as possible—in as many ways as possible. *Because this is what he believes, his feelings towards anyone who is sincerely trying to cultivate love, understanding, and forgiveness is that he would like to encourage them and assist them, in any way possible.*

The IPCR Initiative is an accumulation of documents, resources, and observations brought together to support the propositions that we—collectively—have both the need, and the potential, to be

- 1) much more organized and deliberate about “... bringing to the fore what is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help, as well as to those who receive it.”
- 2) much more multifaceted and participation-friendly in our approaches to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability
- 3) much more resourceful in the use of the storehouses of accumulated wisdom and “embodied energy” which are now accessible to us.

What can we do—at this particular point in time—in the everyday circumstances of our lives, to bring the best ideas *from* the storehouses of accumulated wisdom now accessible to us and “*through the mist*”, so that our community building processes will be most effective in helping us overcome the challenges of our times?

“In the best of times, even the most profound challenges can be overcome; for in the best of times, _____ is/are nurtured, supported, and sustained by family, friends, teachers, mentors, elders, and the everyday influences of community life and cultural traditions.”

Here this writer would like to remind readers that this essay, “Peacebuilding in its Most Compassionate Form”, is an effort to assist fellow human beings in identifying what—from the storehouses of accumulated wisdom now accessible to us—would best answer the above question “What can we do...”—and what—from the storehouses of accumulated wisdom now accessible to us—would best fill in the blank in the above statement.

Three Most Important Points

In the section “About the Writer of This Essay” at the end of this document, this writer affirms that the most important influence in his life has been, and continues to be, Sri Sathya Sai Baba (age 81, with a main residence in Puttaparthi, India). In 1997, this writer completed a 301 page arrangement of selected quotations from “Sathya Sai Speaks” (Vol. 1-11, first U.S. editions) (discourses by Sri Sathya Sai Baba from the years 1953-1982). That document is an unpublished manuscript which has only recently been made accessible to many people by its inclusion in the website of The IPCR Initiative (www.ipcri.net) This writer hereby attributes the inspiration for the approach and substance of The IPCR Initiative, his personal capacity to see good in the efforts of people from many different faith communities and cultural traditions, and his personal faith in a positive outcome regarding the challenges of our times to close contact, over many years, with the wisdom and compassion in the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

And yet—and this is a most important point—in contrast to the outlook which claims a “right” to develop an initiative even though such efforts are felt by many as “a threat (perceived or real) to their identity, or cherished meanings, or both”; this writer would slow or discontinue the development of The IPCR Initiative in such circumstances—until such time as communication leads to better understanding, and circumstances are more mutually beneficial.¹⁰

In addition—and this is also a most important point—it is not necessary for any readers of this document, or any participants in activities associated with The IPCR Initiative, to know anything about Sri Sathya Sai Baba (the most important influence in this writer’s life), or the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, to contribute to or benefit from the work of The IPCR Initiative.

And here, as the third most important point of this section, this writer would like to affirm with as clear a statement as he can possibly make, that The IPCR Initiative encourages people, whether they are going to participate in an IPCR Initiative sponsored activity or not, to use (at no cost)²⁵ the resources provided by The IPCR Initiative to nurture, support, and sustain community life and cultural traditions associated with the particular “frameworks” which give their lives meaning.

This writer—the founder of The IPCR Initiative—believes in affirming the above three points for the following reasons:

- 1) these points define an approach to interfaith peacebuilding and community revitalization which he can support with all his heart
- 2) the challenges of our times are such that it is essential to “bring to the fore” the real treasured wisdom of religious, spiritual, and moral traditions (i.e. there is a profound and critical need for as many people as possible to exercise as much love, understanding, and forgiveness as possible—in as many ways as possible).
- 3) this writer understands, by way of the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the existence of a “current”¹¹—which can be recognized according to the degree to which one has incorporated spiritual understanding into his or her everyday thoughts, words, and deeds... or by the grace of association with profound spiritual teachings.

“Tool Boxes” For Utilizing That “Current” To Do Good

This writer does not hesitate to affirm that he has a ways to go towards the goal of realizing his spiritual potential. And yet the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba are such that he can understand the existence of a “current”, which is active in all circumstances of everyday life, in communities around the world. Consider the following quotation:

“The Divine principle that is in every one is like the electric current that illuminates the bulbs... of different colours and different candle powers. The same God shines in and through every one, whatever be the creed, colour, tribe, or territory.”¹²

The IPCR Initiative is an effort to apply the accumulated wisdom now accessible to us towards the general goal of integrating spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life—and towards the specific goal of generating practical responses to the challenges of our times. Viewed in this light, The IPCR Initiative—and *all related fields of activity*—can be understood as contributions to religious, spiritual, and moral “tool boxes” (many of which have been created from centuries of cultural experience) which have been confirmed by saints, sages, spiritual leaders, and sincere practitioners of all faiths and moral “world views” as storehouses of accumulated wisdom associated with utilizing that “current” to do good.¹³

Appendix 2 is a four page collection of quotations from “Sathya Sai Speaks” (a collection of discourses by Sri Sathya Sai Baba). Appendix 2 is included in this document to help readers understand some of the inspiration for this writers’ view of religious, spiritual, and moral traditions as “tool boxes” which assist us in utilizing that “current” to do good.

The following four sections of this essay provide some examples of the efforts The IPCR Initiative is making to contribute to the “tool boxes” which assist us in utilizing that “current” to do good.

We can see a “contribution to those ‘tool boxes’” in the efforts to develop the following IPCR Concepts...

a) “Community Good News Networks” and “Community Faith Mentoring Networks” (IPCR Concepts #1 and #2)

“Community Good News Networks”—is a name for participation by local community residents in an ongoing process of actively discovering, sharing, encouraging, and creating good news, for the purpose of “... bringing to the fore what is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help as well as to those who receive it.” One way to begin creating “Community Good News Networks” is as follows: ongoing intergenerational programs—programs that bring together elders of the community with young people (ages 5-18) of the community—are created at appropriate meeting places such as local places of worship. Such intergenerational programs would include the following activities: 1) collecting and sharing good news articles, stories, etc., and making contributions to “Good News Reference Resources,” specific to local communities and regions 2) sending notecards of gratitude and encouragement—and invitations to visit—to people who are making good news in the local community or region 3) inspirational sharing meetings featuring “good news makers” from the local community or region. As more and more good news is discovered, shared, and created, participants can give special attention to identifying the “good news makers” who live near their specific meeting place. A local “Community Faith Mentoring Network” could then be established to facilitate matching people of all ages with “faith mentors” in their local community.

Even now, as you are reading this, truly inspiring contributions of genuine goodwill are being generated in a variety of ways—and in a variety of circumstances—by countless numbers of people in communities around the world.

“Community Faith Mentoring Networks”— A “Faith Mentor” can be defined as “a person, who by word, action, and presence, models a meaningful lifestyle, clarifies important life issues, and provides guidance for deepening spirituality in a caring and accepting environment.”¹⁴ Do most of us believe that we already have a “faith mentor” in our lives, and are progressing, consciously and deliberately, towards the full realization of our spiritual potential? Those of us who have had a “faith mentor” in our lives, or

have one now, know how much of a difference such a person has made in our lives... surely, we can then sympathize with others who would like to have such a person in their lives, but do not. While the development of a faith mentoring relationship often takes place within a particular faith community, “Community Faith Mentoring Networks” would be a partnership among many different places of worship and faith traditions, for the purpose of 1) increasing our collective capacity to encourage and inspire individual spiritual formation—with all the beneficial consequences that follow for individuals, communities, regions, etc. and 2) building trust among people from different faith communities and cultural traditions. Applied at the local community and regional level, “Community Good News Networks” and “Community Faith Mentoring Networks” can create ongoing opportunities for people of one particular faith community or cultural tradition to experience the highest ideals of all local community specific and regional specific faith communities and cultural traditions, as representatives of such ideals are better appreciated, more easily recognized—and more numerous—in the everyday circumstances of community life.

We reap what we sow.

b) We can see a “contribution to those ‘tool boxes’” in the efforts to develop “Questionnaires That Help Build Caring Communities” (IPCR Concept #4)

And here are 6 sample questions from The IPCR Spring 2007 “Building Caring Communities” Questionnaire¹⁵:

6. *Arriving at Working Definitions of “Right Livelihood”*

Consider what ways of earning a living you would identify as “right livelihood.”

Now imagine a local community resource guide relating to employment, apprenticeships, training, and volunteer opportunities associated with “right livelihood.”

And further: imagine a committee commissioned to produce such a “right livelihood” resource guide.... And the individuals who make up the committee commissioned to produce such a resource guide....

- a) What background (qualifications, experiences, etc.) would you like such individuals to have?
- b) What local institutions would you consider most appropriate to commission such a resource guide, and oversee its production?

7. *Cultivating Sympathy and Compassion*

Please name 5 people—who you know personally, and/or who you have been influenced by—who have inspired in you the qualities of sympathy for the suffering of others, and willingness to express compassion in ways which might alleviate some of such suffering.

a) What does your local community do—specifically, as a community—to nurture, encourage, support, and inspire-- to cultivate-- such persons, and thus to attract other such people to move into your local community?

Question #15 (excerpts): *For the questions below, please check the box which best corresponds to the way you view the following statements:*

d) “Everyone is involved when it comes to determining the markets that supply the ways of making a living.”¹⁶

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I believe it-- and there is much evidence to support it | I believe it-- and there is sufficient evidence to support it | I would like to believe it, but there isn't enough evidence to support it | It is difficult to believe it, with the way things are going now | I don't believe it-- there is no evidence to support it |

h) “Most people making efforts to realize their spiritual potential need to live in caring communities (see definition on p. 22 of this essay), so that they can find support from association with kindred spirits.”¹⁷

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| agree | agree in some ways | have different view-- or different way of understanding our present circumstances | disagree in some ways | disagree |

Your different view, or different way of understanding our present circumstances: _____

i) “Overcoming the challenges of our times will require fully utilizing all the knowledge, tools, and resources accessible to us for the highest good possible in every area of capacity building (physical, ecological, medical, spiritual, educational, social, economic, technical, political, etc).”¹⁸

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| agree | agree in some ways | have different view-- or different way of understanding our present circumstances | disagree in some ways | disagree |

Your different view, or different way of understanding our present circumstances: _____

j) “The mariner uses his compass to guide him aright amidst the dark storm clouds and raging waves. When Man is overwhelmed by the dark clouds of despair and the raging

confusion of irrepressible desires, he too, has a compass which will point to him the direction he has to take.... That compass is a Society that is dedicated to the propagation of Spiritual Discipline.”¹⁹

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| agree | agree in some ways | have different view--
or different way of
understanding our
present circumstances | disagree in
some ways | disagree |

Your different view, or different way of understanding our present circumstances: _____

c) We can see a “contribution to those ‘tool boxes’” in the efforts to develop the concept of “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace” (IPCR Concept #5)

The IPCR Initiative understands that the complexity associated with building bridges and increasing collaboration between diverse communities of people, the urgent need for resolutions to a significant number of critical issues in the near future—and *the seemingly chronic nature of many of the challenges of our times*—suggests a need for problem solving on a scale most of us have never known before. And the IPCR Initiative believes that the nature of the “Culture Change” necessary to overcome the challenges of our times will require fully utilizing all the knowledge, tools, and resources accessible to us for the highest good possible in every area of capacity building (physical, ecological, medical, spiritual, educational, social, economic, technical, political, etc). The IPCR Initiative also believes that the likelihood of achieving the highest good possible in every area of capacity building can be increased by encouraging the highest possible level of citizen participation in “culture change” activity. Viewed from this perspective, The IPCR Initiative can be seen as a “constellation” of initiatives which are prerequisite ground work for high levels of citizen participation in community visioning initiatives.

Community visioning initiatives, in the past, have been organized for the purpose of maximizing citizen participation in the planning and development phases of community revitalization projects. Community visioning initiatives can be described as a series of community meetings designed to facilitate the process of brainstorming ideas, organizing the ideas into goals, prioritizing the goals, and identifying doable steps. In 1984, the non-profit organization Chattanooga Venture [Chattanooga, Tennessee (USA)], organized a visioning initiative (Vision 2000) that attracted more than 1,700 participants, and produced 40 community goals—which resulted in the implementation of 223 projects and programs, the creation of 1,300 permanent jobs, and a total financial investment of 793 million dollars.²⁰

If even a few community visioning initiatives—of the nature advocated by The IPCR Initiative (“Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace”)—generated results similar to those achieved in Chattanooga, Tennessee (USA), people in all parts of the world—

keenly attuned when it comes to matters of the heart— *could be* inspired to carry out similar visioning initiatives. And if many communities carried out similar visioning initiatives, and also achieved significant results, our collective capacity to overcome the challenges of our times *could* begin to accumulate at an accelerating rate.

Developing, supporting, and participating in a community or regional specific variation of an IPCR Initiative can be one step in a series of steps which contribute to the realization that we—collectively—have the resources necessary to overcome even the most profound challenges of our times. Yes, taking these kind of steps will require, by their very nature, examples of the transforming power of love, understanding, and forgiveness—and faith, discipline, and perseverance will be necessary to achieve the most beneficial results. Still—with the encouragement and support of family, friends, teachers, mentors, elders, and the everyday influences of community life and cultural traditions—all the necessary steps can be taken, and all of the potential can be realized.

d) We can see a “contribution to those ‘tool boxes’” in the efforts to develop the concept of “Spiritually Responsible Investing” (IPCR Concept #6)

The following is an excerpt from a paper (titled “Spiritually Responsible Investing: Integrating Spiritual Wisdom into the Everyday Circumstances of Community Life”) which was presented (in absentia—by a graduate student there) at the “Faith, Spirituality, and Social Change” (FSSC) Conference held at the University of Winchester, Winchester, United Kingdom, April 14-15, 2007

(From the introduction)

“To begin this discussion of Spiritually Responsible Investing, I would like to offer three propositions, and one definition.

“The first proposition is:

There are countless numbers of “things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives” which will contribute to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts, in their own communities and regions—and in other parts of the world.

“The second proposition is:

The ways we “invest” our time, energy, and money have a direct impact on the “ways of earning a living” that are available.

“The third proposition is:

The most advanced societies are the ones which are successful at integrating spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.

“And the one definition:

Spiritually Responsible Investing can be defined as investments of time, energy, and money which increase our capacity to integrate spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.”

Also included in that FSSC paper was reference to the list of related fields of activity which was brought forward earlier in this essay (see p. 3), and commentary on that list.

The commentary on that list included:

“2) People can, one by one, decide to deliberately focus the way they spend their time, energy, and money so that their actions have positive repercussions on many or all of the 105 fields of activity (see p. 3).

3) The result can be that there are countless ‘ways to earn a living’ which contribute to the peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts necessary to overcome the challenges of our times.”

And here are the concluding comments from that paper (titled “Spiritually Responsible Investing: Integrating Spiritual Wisdom into the Everyday Circumstances of Community Life”)

“In Summary, I would like to return again to the question brought forward earlier in this discussion: “What can individuals do to inspire and encourage Spiritually Responsible Investing in the communities where they live?

“And I would now like to respond to that question in this way:

“I believe that any community of people, however small in numbers, who participate in ongoing “Community Good News Networks” and annual “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace”—and who combine the resources created by local community points of entry clearinghouses and “Community Journal/Newsletters” to link many associated efforts (like the 32 fields of activity mentioned in the paper as it was presented)—will surely be assisting with outreach, partnership formation, consensus building, and development of service capacity associated with a significant number of peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts, all at the same time....

“And here is my closing statement—my message to you in the context of this conference on “Faith, Spirituality, and Social Change”:

“Such communities of people will surely provide living proof of the third proposition mentioned in this discussion—that *The most advanced societies are the ones which are successful at integrating spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.*”²¹

There is much potential which can be realized by contributing to the “tool boxes” which assist us in utilizing that “current” to do good

We have both the need—and the potential-- to be much more resourceful in the use of the storehouses of accumulated wisdom and ‘embodied energy’ which are now accessible to us.

There is much potential which can be realized by contributing to the “tool boxes” which assist us in utilizing that “current” to do good.

The IPCR Initiative stands ready to do its part to help people attain the faith, wisdom, and resources necessary to overcome the challenges of our times.

Ongoing Revitalization of a Communities’ “Moral Compass”

How can local communities arrive at practical definitions of “right livelihood”? What local institutions would be most appropriate as commissioners and overseers of a resource guide to “right livelihood”? How can leaders at the regional and local community level assure residents that they understand the challenges of our times, if they themselves do not participate in the very activities they advocate for overcoming the challenges of our times? How can our communities change “the way things get done” so that more people can live in accordance with their moral convictions? Workshops associated with The IPCR Initiative can identify, discover, create, support, and sustain comprehensive and practical answers to these very relevant questions— and provide a system by which the answers can be re-evaluated and re-stated on an ongoing basis. *Therefore, it may be said that by its very nature The IPCR Initiative includes a built-in and ongoing process for re-evaluating and re-stating the “moral compass” of a community or region.* And it may also be said that such a “moral compass” would incorporate any genuine and sincere contributions from participants associated with any religious, spiritual, or moral tradition without any damage to the genuine and sincere parts of the “framework” which gives meaning to their lives.

A “Multiplier Effect” of a Positive Nature

The IPCR Initiative is aware of an urgent need to build bridges and increase collaboration between diverse communities of people; both as a response to the implications of global warming, ecological footprint analysis, and the “peaking” of our finite supplies of oil—and to be proactive about individual spiritual formation, interfaith peacebuilding, and the creation of ecologically sustainable communities.

The IPCR Initiative understands that the complexity associated with building bridges and increasing collaboration between diverse communities of people, the urgent need for resolutions to a significant number of critical issues in the near future—and *the seemingly chronic nature of many of the challenges of our times*—suggests a need for problem solving on a scale most of us have never known before.

Assessments of the challenges of our times such as the one offered in Appendix 1 provide evidence that there is a profound and critical need for human beings—collectively—to be

- 1) much more organized and deliberate about “... bringing to the fore what is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help, as well as to those who receive it.”
- 2) much more multifaceted and participation-friendly in our approaches to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability
- 3) much more resourceful in the use of the storehouses of accumulated wisdom and “embodied energy” which are now accessible to us.

Specifically, the contributions The IPCR Initiative hopes to make along the lines described by the three goals listed above are as follows:

1) inspire, encourage, and support the creation of many local community specific and regional specific variations of the “...Towards Higher Common Ground...” Survey²²—so that the actual survey takes place in as many ways as possible (For more information about the “... Towards Higher Common Ground...” Survey, see the “Core Documents” section of this website)

2) introduce The Eight IPCR Concepts through workshops²³ offered at the local community level

3) actively develop the concept of “Questionnaires That Help Build Caring Communities”, administer such questionnaires at the community and/or regional level, and then share compilations of the responses (with summary and conclusions)

4) actively contribute to the planning, preparation, and realization of “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace” at the community and regional levels

5) help to establish, and contribute to, local community points of entry acting as “clearinghouses”, where residents can discover more about the countless number of “things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives” which will contribute to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability in their own communities and regions—and in other parts of the world

6) identify, develop, and create enough descriptions and examples of the 105 fields of activity

and generate enough regular feature material in categories such as local community and regional good news, workshop and conference listings, committee reports, resource reviews, letters to the editor, “community journal” postings, and links to other useful information and organizations

to justify monthly local community specific publications of an IPCR Journal/Newsletter (or a similar publication with a different name....)

7) and combine the resources created by “clearinghouses,” and “community newsletters” to link many associated efforts—such as those in “A List of Related Fields of Activity” (see p. 3)—and thus assist with outreach, partnership formation, consensus building and development of service capacity associated with a significant number of peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts, all at the same time.

The IPCR Initiative is providing this assistance as a result of believing that any community of people, however small in numbers, who follow through on most or all of the practical assistance described in the seven steps mentioned above, will contribute a “multiplier effect” of a positive nature on *whatever goals are decided on at the local community and regional levels.*

Creating More and More Meaningful Ways to “Fill in the Blank”

As stated earlier, this writer believes—and hopes many other people share this belief—that if we are to overcome the challenges of our times we will need not only the resources which innovators can prove the existence of by scientific method; we will also need the resources which people of faith *believe exist* as a result of inner experience. The IPCR Mission Statement codifies this belief into goals relevant to overcoming the challenges of our times. Workshops introducing The Eight IPCR Concepts (“Community Good News Networks,” “Community Faith Mentoring Networks,” “Spiritual Friendships,” “Questionnaires That Help Build Caring Communities,” “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace,” “Spiritually Responsible Investing,” “Ecological Sustainability,” and “IPCR Journal/Newsletters”) can provide for each of us more and more opportunities to contribute towards such goals, more and more understanding about why we would want to contribute—and more and more opportunities to encourage and support each other in the process.

By incorporating spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of daily life, it will be more and more possible for people of every religious, spiritual, and moral tradition to feel and experience the “current” referred to by the following quotations:

“The Divine principle that is in every one is like the electric current that illuminates the bulbs... of different colours and different candle powers. The same God shines in and through every one, whatever be the creed, colour, tribe, or territory.”¹²

“Let not the bulb think that it is shining through its own will; let it be humble, that it is but an instrument, used by the current, to shed light.”²⁴

In this way, The IPCR Initiative—and all related fields of activity—can be understood as contributions to religious, spiritual, and moral “tool boxes” (many of which have been created from centuries of cultural experience) which have been confirmed by saints, sages, spiritual leaders, and sincere practitioners of all faiths and moral “world views” as storehouses of accumulated wisdom associated with utilizing that “current” to do good.¹³ In this way, The IPCR Initiative has much to offer which will assist us in fully utilizing all the knowledge, tools, and resources accessible to us for the highest good possible in every area of capacity building (physical, ecological, medical, spiritual, educational, social, economic, technical, political, etc).

The IPCR Initiative sympathizes with the difficulties many people are having in their efforts to work towards living in caring communities, and would like to do everything possible to make resources accessible to those people who can make good use of them. The IPCR Initiative therefore encourages people to view the documents created by The IPCR Initiative as documents that may be copied without permission²⁵—and used to nurture, support, and sustain community life and cultural traditions associated with the particular “frameworks” which give their lives meaning. Hopefully, this kind of policy will help facilitate the kind of problem solving which will create *many meaningful answers* to the challenge of filling in the blank in the following statement (initially offered in the introduction to this essay):

In the best of times, even the most profound challenges can be overcome; for in the best of times, _____ is/are nurtured, supported, and sustained by family, friends, teachers, mentors, elders, and the everyday influences of community life and cultural traditions.

Our Particular Moment in Time on This Planet Earth *Could Be* the Best of Times

There are many important initiatives which are critical to overcoming the challenges of our times, but which are not quite “coming through the mist as much as they should be.” The IPCR Initiative can be very helpful in exactly these kinds of circumstances, as it encourages and facilitates a “constellation” of initiatives by which the best (*in the view of the participants using these processes*) associated with individual spiritual formation, interfaith peacebuilding, community revitalization, ecological sustainability, etc. can bubble up to the surface, be recognized as priorities, and therefore be brought forward as appropriate recipients of peoples’ time, energy, and money. Many people can realize the wisdom of deliberately focusing the way they spend their time, energy, and money so that their actions have positive repercussions on the fields of activity described by the IPCR Mission Statement goals, and on other related fields of activity (see “105 related fields of activity” on p. 3). As the ancient Chinese proverb says: “Many hands make much work light.”

One of the most persistent ironies in life is that with so many opportunities to provide real assistance to fellow human beings—and with the potential for such assistance to result in happiness “to those who extend help as well as to those who receive it”—there are still many, many people in this world who cannot find a “way to earn a living” providing such assistance. The IPCR Initiative can help to remedy such an unfortunate irony by helping to create “caring communities”, which are defined here as follows:

“Caring communities” are communities with residents who are aware of the depth and range of the challenges of our times, and therefore do their best to take actions which will have positive repercussions on the fields of activity described by the IPCR Mission Statement goals (see p. 6-7), and on other related fields of activity (see p. 3).

The most advanced societies are the ones which are successful at integrating spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.

Our particular moment in time on this Planet Earth *could be* the best of times.

Peacebuilding in its Most Compassionate Form

Peacebuilding in its most compassionate form is not a competitive field of activity. Viewed in this light, the most valuable forms of peacebuilding will nurture, support, and sustain the development of an infinite variety of other forms of peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecologically sustainability initiatives. The IPCR Initiative is an effort to nurture, support, and sustain peacebuilding in its most compassionate form.

Appendix 1

Here is a ten point assessment by The IPCR Initiative of “the most difficult challenges of our times”: [Note: This ten point assessment is excerpted from a 29 page IPCR document titled “An Assessment of the Most Difficult Challenges of Our Times”, which includes (as supporting evidence) 26 items of commentary and analysis and 17 statistics].²

1) Community building associated with energy descent (see Challenges #4, 5, and 6) (as a result of either wise decisions, key supply shortages, or lack of other options) may or may not be accompanied by an exponential increase in compassion for our fellow human beings. *Without such an exponential increase*, an increase in the need for emergency assistance to people with basic human needs [as a result of migrations from areas where carrying capacity has been exceeded (areas such as mega-cities), for example (see Challenge #8)] may coincide with a decrease in our capacity to respond to such emergencies

2) “Cultures” of violence, greed, corruption, and overindulgence which have become so common that many of us accept such as inevitable²⁶

3) The source of threats—whether perceived or real—to the identities and/or cherished meanings of many communities of people is too often linked to religious, spiritual, and/or moral traditions; and such threats too often result in conflicts which cast a shadow of negative associations onto such traditions. These negative associations have caused many people to disassociate from the religious, spiritual, and/or moral traditions linked to such threats; and have accumulated to such a degree that the real treasured wisdom of many such traditions now seems as if it is hidden—or remains undiscovered. This is unfortunate—as such treasured wisdom contains teachings which inspire and encourage people to

a) appreciate truth, virtue, love, and peace—and live disciplined lives for the purpose of adhering to truth, cultivating virtue and love, and maintaining the pathways to enduring peace

b) sacrifice personal desires for the greater good of the whole

c) find contentment and quality of life while consuming less material goods and ecological services

d) prefer peacebuilding which supports and actualizes mutually beneficial understandings, forgiveness, and reconciliation—and *which abstains from violent conflict resolution*—as a way of bringing cycles of violence to an end

e) use resources carefully, so that there is surplus available for emergency assistance

f) support community life and cultural traditions which “... bring to the fore what is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help, as well as to those who receive it.”

4), 5) and 6) Planet-wide climate chaos and global warming, the end of the era of cheap oil (“peak oil”), and widespread resource depletion and extinction (the “Triple Crises”)

Consider the following references (with additional corroborating quotes) to pre-conference (September, 2007) information for a “Teach In: Confronting the Global Triple Crises—Climate Change, Peak Oil (The End of Cheap Energy), and Global Resource Depletion

and Extinction” (September 14-17, 2007 at The George Washington University Lisner Auditorium in Washington D.C.) (USA) Sponsored by The International Forum on Globalization (www.ifg.org) and The Institute on Policy Studies

“The planet’s ecological systems are on the verge of catastrophic change for which few societies are prepared. So far, responses by governments to this emergency are inadequate, or counterproductive. We call it the “Triple Crisis,” the convergence of three advancing conditions:

- a) Planet-wide climate chaos and global warming (“There is a serious risk of widespread, catastrophic climate change if we do not begin dramatically reducing global carbon emissions”²⁷)
- b) The end of the era of cheap energy (“peak oil”) (“The peaking of world oil production presents the U.S. and the world with an unprecedented risk management problem.... The world has never faced a problem like this....”²⁸)
- c) The depletion of many of the world’s key resources: water, timber, fish, fertile soil, coral reefs; and the expected extinction of 50% of the world’s species.

“All are rooted in the same systemic problem—massive overuse of fossil fuels and the Earth’s resources; all driven by an economic ideology of hyper growth and consumption that’s beyond the limits of the planet to sustain.”²⁹

- 7) The increasing world population and its implications relating to widespread resource depletion (with special focus on *the increasing number of people* who are consuming material goods and ecological resources *indiscriminately*)
- 8) Current trends indicate that we are creating more and more “urban agglomerations” (cities with a population of more than 1 million people), which require more and more complex and energy intensive infrastructures, where it is more and more difficult to trace the consequences of our individuals investments of time, energy, and money—and which are the least appropriate models when it comes to implementing resolutions to many of the other challenges included in this list.³⁰ (Note: “Response nodes” for emergency assistance, and centers for regional and international exchange of “weak link” materials do not require a mega-city infrastructure base)
- 9) Any shortages of goodwill in times of unprecedented transition could tilt already precarious systems into further disarray—and thus erode established systems in even the most stable communities and regions
- 10) Sorting out what are real challenges and what are sound and practical solutions is becoming more and more difficult, as there is now, in many parts of the world, a multitude of ideas of all kinds coming to the fore in personal, family, community, and cultural life—all at the same time.

Appendix 2

This writer hereby attributes the inspiration for the approach and substance of The IPCR Initiative, his personal capacity to see good in the efforts of many people from different faith communities and cultural traditions, and his personal faith in a positive outcome regarding the challenges of our times to close contact, over many years, with the wisdom and compassion in the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Here are a collection of quotations from “Sathya Sai Speaks” (Vol. 1-15), which are particularly relevant to this writer’s capacity to see good in the world. He thinks of the quotations in this arrangement as contributions to an interfaith point of view, and so it has been given that title.

Contributions to an Interfaith Point of View

(from the Discourses of Sri Sathya Sai Baba)

(with one quote from the Rg Veda)

(this arrangement is an unpublished arrangement by this writer)

[Note: The quotations below are from “Sathya Sai Speaks” (Vol. 1-15) (Discourses given by Sri Sathya Sai Baba during the years 1953-1982) The particular quotations have been referenced using the abbreviation “SSS” for “Sathya Sai Speaks”. The remaining parts of the citation-- for example 7.3 p.16-- refers to Volume 7, Chapter 3, page 16. The “Sathya Sai Speaks” series is published by the Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust Prasanthi Nilayam India (Additional Note: “Sathya Sai Speaks” Vol. 1-35 can be accessed via the Internet at <http://www.sathyasai.org/search/default.htm>)

A) “... lamps lit from the same flame....”

- 1) “All men are lamps lit from the same flame which is God.” (SSS 7.3 p.16)
- 2) “It is the same substance poured into different moulds. (SSS 2.2 p.5)
- 3) The Divine principle that is in every one is like the electric current that illuminates the bulbs... of different colours and different candle powers. The same God shines in and through every one, whatever be the creed, colour, tribe, or territory.” (SSS 8.22 p.115)

B) “All beings are images of the Universal Atma....”

- 1) “When you clarify and sanctify your Vision and look at them through the Atmic eye, the eye that penetrates beyond the physical (with all its attributes and appurtenances), then, you will see the others as Waves on the Ocean of the Absolute, as the ‘thousand heads, the thousand eyes, thousand feet’ of the Supreme Sovereign person or ‘Purusha’ sung in the Rgveda.” (SSS 13.8 p.38)

- 2) “All beings are images of the Universal Atma, in the names and forms they have apparently assumed.” (SSS 11.54 p.306)
- 3) “All the 1000 names of thousand faced society connote only the one God that plays in those 1000 roles. The One appears as if it is enshrined in the 1000 bodies. This is the truth you have to realize and cherish as the most precious in life.” (SSS 11.47 p.278)

C) “There is a road from each heart to the Source of all Joy...”

- 1) “There is a road from each heart to the Source of all Joy, namely, God. Each one will come in his own good time, at his own pace, through his own inner urge, along the path that God will reveal to him as his own.” (SSS 11.3 p.20)
- 2) “... in the spiritual path, each one has to move forward from where he already is, according to his own pace, in the light of the lamp which each one holds in his own hand.” (SSS 6.7 p.37)

D) “All... are pilgrims proceeding along the path...”

- 1) “... the path of devotion... is a spiritual discipline of the heart and results in Love and service to all as fellow pilgrims to the same divine goal.” (SSS 13.24 p.136)
- 2) “All are pilgrims on the road; some going fast, some going slow, that is all. The goal is the same for you all, though the roads may be many.” (SSS 2.35 p.206)
- 3) “All men in all countries are pilgrims proceeding along the path towards God. The progress of each is decided by the discipline adapted, the character formed, the ideal kept in view, the leadership chosen, and the faith implanted.” (SSS 8.25 p.135-136)
- 4) “So, you may speak different languages or use different sound-signals, and follow different habits of food and dress-- and even of worship and prayer. But, they are all... instruments for your uplift and progress...” (SSS 3.38 p.216-217)
- 5) “The basic truths of religion are not tarnished by the evil men practice or the competitive propaganda they indulge in.” (SSS 11.54 p.307)
- 6) “Do not damage the faith of anyone, in virtue and divinity. Encourage others to have that faith by demonstrating in your own life that virtue is its own reward...” (SSS 5.50 p.277)
- 7) “... Sai wants the votaries of each religion to cultivate faith in its own excellence, and realize its validity by its own intense practice. That is the Sai religion, the religion that feeds and fosters all religions and emphasizes their common greatness.” (SSS 13.23 p.131)
- 8) “Love your religion, so that you may practice it with greater faith; and, when each one practices his religion with faith, there can be no hatred in the world, for all religions are built on universal love.” (SSS 5.44 p.246)

E) "... the Seva of the Lord keeps you always in His Presence...."

- 1) "God appears before you as a blind beggar, an idiot, a leper, a child, a decrepit old man, a criminal, or a madman. You must look behind those veils for the Divine embodiment of love, power, and wisdom—the Sai—and worship Him through selfless service to humanity." (SSS 13.8 p.38)
- 2) "His Glory, His Compassion, His Grace—these are inscrutable; they shape themselves in manifold forms, as He wills." (SSS 8.28 p.159)
- 3) "People do not understand the ways of God. How can they know why a particular event takes place at a particular time in a particular manner. He alone can know." (SSS 7.7 p.43)
- 4) "Even if you falter in the adoration of God, do not falter in the service of the living God, who has assumed human shape and is moving all around you in such large numbers and wearing such manifold costumes of apparel and speech!" (SSS 10.39 p.264)
- 5) "You must be happy that the Seva of the Lord keeps you always in His Presence, and ever vigilant to carry out His behests." (SSS 4.24 p.137)
- 6) "'Sarvathah pani padam, sarvathokshi siro mukham', says the Githa. All hands are His; all feet, all eyes, and all faces and mouths are His; He works through all hands, He walks through all feet, He sees through each eye, He eats and speak through every mouth. Everything is He. Every step is His, every look, every speech, every act is His. That is the lesson that Seva instills." (SSS 11.22 p.115-116)
- 7) "Let not the bulb think that it is shining through its own will; let it be humble, that it is but an instrument, used by the current, to shed light." (SSS 7.38 p.195)

F) "We too can discover the Lord through His Footprints...."

- 1) "God has a million names, Sages and Saints have seen Him in a million Forms; they have seen Him with eyes closed and eyes open. They have extolled Him in all the languages and dialects of man; but yet, His glory is not exhausted." (SSS 8.22 p.119)
- 2) "We too can discover the Lord through His Footprints, which can be discovered everywhere, provided sincere search is made with trained eyes. You can find the footprints wherever there is beauty, virtue, humility, justice, truth, love and peace." (SSS 6.37 p.185)
- 3) "Yes, the lesson is: recognize His Footprints in every thing of beauty, every act of goodness, every tear of gratitude, every sign of compassion...." (SSS 9.17 p.89)
- 4) "God is not to be spoken of as coming down or going up, since He is everywhere, available for your becoming aware of Him, through beauty, truth, goodness, strength, love or any one of the divine attributes." (SSS 8.3 p.13)

G) "... co-mingle and become more and more composite."

- 1) "The Universe is the Field where God sports. Be aware of this fact, every moment of consciousness, and there is nothing more you need for a happy existence. For, you will then contact God in every thing through every thought at every place and at every moment. His Leela is evident in the smallest flower and the most distant star. The joy that you can derive from the contemplation of these proofs of providence is indescribable."
(SSS 13.16 p.80-81)
- 2) "In the beginning, the Adored and the Adorer are distant and different; but, as the Sadhana becomes more confirmed and consolidated, they co-mingle and become more and more composite."
(SSS 7.48 p.240)
- 3) "When merged, the ego is dissolved; all symbols and signs of the particular, like name, form, caste, colour, creed, nationality, church, sect, and the rights and duties consequent thereon, will fade."
(SSS 7.48 p.240)

H) "Truth is one; sages speak of It variously."

- 1) "There is only one God; He is omnipresent."
(SSS 11.54 p.312)
- 2) "... every name is but a facet, a part, a ray, of the Supreme. The spiritual discipline consists in recognizing and becoming aware of the One that supports and sustains the many. That is the precious gem of wisdom that one must secure and treasure."
(SSS 13.24 p.136)
- 3) "God has a million names, Sages and Saints have seen Him in a million forms; they have seen Him with eyes closed and eyes open. They have extolled Him in all the languages and dialects of man; but yet, His Glory is not exhausted."
(SSS 8.22 p.119)
- 4) "Truth is one; the sages speak of It variously." (Rg Veda)
(from www.storytellingmonk.org)
- 5) "When it is known and appreciated that the One manifested Itself as the many and that the One is known by many names, there is really no scope for hatred or irreverence."
(SSS 13.39 p.226)

Notes and References

1. This ten point assessment is excerpted from a 29 page document titled “An Assessment of the Most Difficult Challenges of Our Times” (accessible at the IPCR website at www.ipcri.net), which includes (as supporting evidence) 26 items of commentary and analysis and 17 statistics (from various sources).
2. The IPCR Initiative is aware that there are many very difficult issues which could be defined as “the most difficult challenges of our times”. By even making a list at all, The IPCR Initiative is not suggesting it can offer a definitive assessment.

The purpose of the designations made in the ten point assessment offered is:

- a) to help other people appreciate how becoming involved in a comprehensive assessment of the challenges of our times can be useful for re-framing public discourse
- b) to help other people appreciate that these issues “pervade our globe; ... are complex due to the interdependent nature of all modern nation-states; (and) are all interwoven, making it difficult, if not impossible, to deal with one in isolation from the others....” [From John D. Haas “Future Studies in K-12 Curriculum” Social Science Educational Consortium 1988 (page number not retrieved)]
- c) to illustrate how The IPCR Initiative can contribute to the resolution of even the most profound challenges of our times.

3. Here are two quotations which may help readers with the concept of “embodied energy”:

“The energy invested in a particular thing during its life from cradle to grave, is called the ‘embodied energy’ of that object. The amount of embodied energy that an item contains depends on the technology used to create it (the origin of material inputs, how they were created and transported, etc.) the nature of the production system, and the distance the item travels from inception to purchase.”

[from *State of the World 2004 (Special Focus: The Consumer Society)* Worldwatch Institute Washington D.C. 2004 p. 36-37]

From “*Permaculture and Energy*” (by David Holmgren, co-creator of the “permaculture” concept) (article first written in 1990, published in “Permaculture Activist” Issue #31 May, 1994) (see subsection titled “Mollison”) (<http://permacultureactivist.net/Holmgren/holmgren.htm>) (Accessed June 10, 2007)

“The transition from an unsustainable fossil fuel-based economy back to a solar-based (agriculture and forestry) economy will (require making best use) of the embodied energy that we inherit from industrial culture. This embodied energy is contained within a vast array of things, infrastructure, cultural processes and ideas, mostly inappropriately configured for the ‘solar’ economy. It is the task of our age to take this great wealth, reconfigure it, and apply it to the development of sustainable systems.”

4. The brief descriptions of "community heroes"—and the information in the paragraph above these descriptions—are from an article titled “Blazing An Olympian Trail” by Paul Duggan in The District Weekly section of the Washington Post, on June 13, 1996. (The brief descriptions of “community heroes” are in a graphic titled “Olympic Torchbearers”, see p. 2.) [This article can be accessed through most public library websites, using the “Washington Post” Archives provided in the “Research Tools” section, and searching for “Paul Duggan” on “June 13, 1996”. Note: A valid library card would be needed to access such “Research Tools”. (Confirmed October 14, 2007)]

5. A partial quote from Michelle Maiese (see knowledge based essay "Moral or Value Conflicts", paragraph 3) Beyond Intractability. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted: July 2003
<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/intolerable_moral_differences/>.

6. By this writer, with ideas (and one partial quote) from Michelle Maiese (see knowledge based essay "Moral or Value Conflicts", paragraph 3) Beyond Intractability. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted: July 2003
<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/intolerable_moral_differences/>.

7. Sri Sathya Sai Baba from *Sathya Sai Speaks* Vol. 15, Chpt. 33, p. 178 Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust Prasanthi Nilayam India (Note: Vol. 8 contains discourses delivered by Sri Sathya Sai Baba during the years 1981-1982)

8. Michelle LeBaron in "Cultural and Worldview Frames." (paragraph 2) Beyond Intractability. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted: August 2003
<http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/cultural_frames/>.

9. From the “Hirsch Report” [“The Peaking of World Oil Production: Impacts, Mitigation and Risk Management”—Project Leader: Robert L. Hirsch (SAIC) Commissioned by the Department of Energy, and dated February, 2005] [Accessible at the website of Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD)(USA) at www.bartlett.house.gov/EnergyUpdates/]

(in “Summary and Concluding Remarks”)

“Over the past century the development of the U.S. economy and lifestyle has been fundamentally shaped by the availability of abundant, low-cost oil. Oil scarcity and several-fold oil price increases due to world oil production peaking could have dramatic impacts.” (see Point #2: “Oil Peaking Could Cost the U.S. Economy Dearly”, p. 64)

“The world has never faced a problem like this. Without massive mitigation more than a decade before the fact, the problem will be pervasive and will not be temporary.” (see Point #3: “Oil Peaking Presents a Unique Challenge”, p. 64)

[Additional Note: Less and less availability of cheap oil will directly impact much more of the infrastructure of modern industrial society than most of us can easily imagine. [For some examples, see “The Oil Crash and You” by Bruce Thomson at www.oilcrash.com/roe.htm (Note: Bruce Thomson is a technical writer in New Zealand, and moderator of the RunningonEmpty2 Internet Discussion Forum, which assisted in creating the document.)]

10. There is an element of faith and philosophy in this willingness (if necessary) to “slow or discontinue” development of The IPCR Initiative (if necessary), which is a reflection of this writers interpretation of the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba—and this writers’ interpretation of the following concept: “There is an estrangement present between elements that naturally belong together. Do not try to reunify the situation with force. Allow things to return to a state of accord naturally, as they will.” [Quote from Hexagram #38 (“Contradiction”) in *The I Ching Workbook* (An Interpretation with Commentary) by R.L. Wing Main Street Books (Spi Edition) 1978

11. Two particular quotations in Appendix 2—A 3) and E) 7)—may be especially helpful in appreciating this concept of a “current”. In addition, readers may also find it helpful to review the contents of footnotes #3, #13, and #21. From his own personal experience, this writer offers the following: just as a glint of reflected sunlight comes from a fish which suddenly moves in the stream, so any movement in the direction of truth, virtue, love, and peace has the potential to provide a “glimpse” of this “current”— or a way of “feeling” the good results of this “current”. Eventually (however), no matter what anyone may say on the subject, a full appreciation of this concept of “current” can only be arrived at by learning first hand—from direct experience—what spiritual wisdom is, and how to live in accordance with such wisdom in the everyday circumstances of one’s daily life. [Note: *The IPCR Initiative is most interested in helping to develop well-organized, peaceful, constructive, and ongoing community building processes, which result in the accumulation of more and more opportunities for people to practice spiritual wisdom in the everyday circumstances of community life.*]

12. Sri Sathya Sai Baba from *Sathya Sai Speaks* Vol. 8, Chpt. 22, p. 115 Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust Prasanthi Nilayam India (Note: Vol. 8 contains discourses delivered by Sri Sathya Sai Baba during 1968)

13. There are opportunities in every minute of every day for people to “catch a glimpse” of this “current” in the process of actively affirming the treasured wisdom from the teachings of religious, spiritual, and moral traditions. Consider the following “awareness exercise”:

During the course of any given day—and in ways we may not even be aware of—acts of kindness and courtesy by practitioners of the Hindu faith inspire Muslims to become better Muslims; acts of kindness and courtesy by practitioners of the Islamic faith inspire Christians to become better Christians; acts of kindness and courtesy by practitioners of the Christian faith inspire Buddhists to become better Buddhists; and so on.

And consider further: that during the course of our lives, we all require the benefit of experiences, goods, and services from countless numbers of other people.

To be more specific, this writer now asks you (kind reader) to consider tracing the materials and “human energy input” associated with the water you use (and drink); the food you eat; the building structure which you call home; the clothes you wear; the mode of transportation you use;

the fuel for that mode of transportation—and the centuries of cultural experiences which make up the knowledge and wisdom now accessible via the Internet....

Even if we use only the implications of this very limited exercise, by the end of any given day countless numbers of people in this world will have had the opportunity—whether they were aware of it or not—to be a positive influence in the lives of countless numbers of other people who are practitioners of a faith tradition different than themselves... (end of “awareness” exercise)

[The question therefore becomes: what messages do we give to others by what we do in the world, and the way we do it?]

14. Sondra Higgins Mattheia in “Faith Mentor: Mediating God’s Grace Through Interpersonal Relationships” Dissertation: Thesis (Ph.D) School of Theology at Claremont (CA) 1989 p. 61

15. The following excerpt from the introduction to that document—“The IPCR Spring 2007 “Building Caring Communities” Questionnaire—may help readers understand how such questionnaires can be useful to community building efforts. [Note: For the definition of “Caring communities” used by The IPCR Initiative, see p. 20.]

“Organizations and communities of people often use questionnaires and surveys to identify problems and resources, and to build consensus for collective action. Here are five ways questions like those included in this section can help build caring communities:

- a) A local community or regional information services provider could publish the questions, receive and organize the responses, and then publish a compilation of the responses
- b) Residents of a local community could discuss the compilation of responses in small group settings
- c) If there was a “Community Journal” at a central location in the community, attributed (or anonymous) responses to the questionnaire could be accumulated in the “journal”, providing a constructive framework for public discourse
- d) Annual questionnaires can become part of a traditional community event which includes evaluating, summarizing, and celebrating successful initiatives in the areas of peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability—and contributions to a “community yearbook”
- e) The use of questionnaires for the specific purpose of helping to build caring communities will surely bring forth comments and suggestions on how to improve such questionnaires, and will thus assist in building a resource base of “most helpful questions” for future use....”

16. This writer

17. This writer

18. This writer

19. Sri Sathya Sai Baba from *Sathya Sai Speaks* Vol. 8, Chpt. 21, p. 108 Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust Prasanthi Nilayam India (Note: Vol. 8 contains discourses delivered by Sri Sathya Sai Baba during 1968)

20. The above statistics are from “Revision 2000: Take Charge Again”, a brochure this writer received from Chattanooga Venture. These statistics are also accessible in a detailed overview of Chattanooga community revitalization efforts titled “Chattanooga: The Sustainable City”, at the website for the James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership at

www.academy.umd.edu/publications/Boundary/CaseStudies/bcschattanooga.htm

(Accessed June 10, 2007)

21. Much of the inspiration for this writers’ approach to developing the concept “Spiritually Responsible Investing” originated from his reading of the book “Why the Village Movement?”, by J.C. Kumarappa (the edition this writer has includes the 1939 edition foreward by Mahatma Gandhi, and was printed on handmade paper in Rajchat, Kashi in 1960).

Here are a few key passages from that book:

“... every article in the bazaar has moral and spiritual values attached to it... hence it behooves us to enquire into the antecedents of every article we buy.... (Yet this) is an arduous task, and it becomes almost impossible for ordinary persons to undertake it when the article comes from far off countries. Therefore, it is that we have to restrict our purchase to articles made within our cognizance. This is the moral basis of Swadeshi.” (p. 72-73)

“If we feel it is beyond us to guarantee the concomitant results of all our transactions, it necessarily follows that we must limit our transactions to a circle well within our control. This is the bed rock of swadeshi... The smaller the circumference, the more accurately can we guage the results of our actions, and (the) more conscientiously shall we be able to fulfill our obligations as trustees.” (p.79)

“We do not live unto ourselves, and the more we realize the repercussions of our actions on our neighbors and strive to act according to the highest we are capable of, the more shall we advance in our spiritual development.” (p.73)

“The function of work should be to practice our ideal of life.” (p. 183)

Here also is some biographical information about J.C. Kumarappa:

“In 1935, the India National Congress formed the All India Village Industries Association (AIVIA) for the development of (the) rural economy (in India), with Gandhiji as President and Kumarappa as Secretary and Organiser. Between 1935-1939, Kumarappa established the AIVIA headquarters at Maganwadi, developed various experiments of rural technologies, and helped others to reorganize village industries all over the country. (At Maganwadi), he edited a monthly journal, “Gram Udyog Patrika,” and wrote a book, ‘Why the Village Movement?’ for AIVIA.” [Note excerpted from “Brief Life Sketch of J.C. Kumarappa (1892-1960) at the website of the Kumarappa Institute of Gram Swaraj (KIGS) www.kigs.org]

22. The full title of the document referred to is “A Project Proposal for ‘Towards Higher Common Ground’: A Survey of Most Difficult Challenges and Most Valuable Resources” (and it is accessible at the website of The IPCR Initiative). As mentioned in the “Introduction” to this essay, the proposal itself provides

- a) an overview of evidence which contributed to this writers sense that there is a need for a survey like this
- b) many examples of what responses to such a survey might look like, as an indication of how useful such a survey could be.

The actual survey (as proposed) would consist of the following four questions:

- a) What are the most difficult challenges of our times?
- b) Do we have the resources necessary to overcome the challenges of our times?
- c) If your answer to Question #2 is yes, please describe the resources you believe will contribute the most to helping us—collectively—overcome these difficult challenges.
- d) If your answer to Question #2 is no, please offer any and all sincere, constructive, relevant, and practical suggestions for what we—collectively—can do to inspire, encourage, and/or create the resources you believe *would be necessary* to overcome these difficult challenges.

23. The Eight IPCR Concepts are:

“Community Good News Networks,” “Community Faith Mentoring Networks,” “Spiritual Friendships,” “Questionnaires That Help Build Caring Communities,” “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace,” “Spiritually Responsible Investing,” “Ecological Sustainability,” and “IPCR Journal/Newsletters”

In general, IPCR Concept Introduction Workshops could include discussion of the IPCR assessment of the ten “most difficult challenges of our times”, The IPCR Mission Statement, what contributions The Eight IPCR Concepts could make to overcoming the challenges of our times, and how to begin applying the concepts in everyday community life.

Specifically, IPCR workshop discussion could “branch out” using content from any of the sections in “The IPCR Workshop Primer” (see the “Core Documents” section of the IPCR website, at www.ipcri.net). Here are some examples of content in that document which can be used as starting points for IPCR workshop discussion:

- a) the 7 points describing what the IPCR Initiative hopes to contribute in the “Capability Statement” (Section 3) (see p. 20 of this document)
- b) the 105 Related Fields of Activity (Section 6) (see p. 3 of this document)
- c) the 4 parts of “The IPCR Vision Statement” (Section 7)
- d) the 23 Different Ways of Describing The IPCR Initiative (Section 8)
- e) the 60 sample questions in the “Building Caring Communities” Questionnaire (Section 11)
- f) the 78 Inspiring Role Models (Section 13)
- g) the 75 Service-Oriented Initiatives (Section 14)

In addition to focusing on material provided by this “Workshop Primer”, IPCR workshop discussion can also be supplemented by other material on the IPCR website (at www.ipcri.net), by comments contributed to the IPCR Community Journal (at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ipcri/>), by material on the Internet associated with the 105 related fields of activity listed in Section 6, and by other related material accessible through the Internet, or by personal experience. There is much that can be done to generate goodwill and promote peace that has not yet been done. There is much potential which can be explored in the context of IPCR Workshop discussion.

24. Sri Sathya Sai Baba from *Sathya Sai Speaks* Vol. 7, Chpt. 38, p. 195 Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust Prasanthi Nilayam India (Note: Vol. 7 contains discourses delivered by Sri Sathya Sai Baba during 1967)

25. The formal version of The IPCR Copyright Policy is as follows: “In light of the urgent need to build bridges and increase collaboration between diverse communities of people, all of the documents, information, resources, etc. created by The IPCR Initiative are viewed as resources which ought to be made as accessible as possible to people who can make good use of them. Therefore, all such documents and information (including this document) may be reproduced without permission, and distributed in any way the user believes will be consistent with the goals listed in The IPCR Mission Statement. [Please note: Quotes, statistics, and other copyrighted material used in IPCR documents have been appropriately attributed to their copyrighted sources. Readers may thus be assured that The IPCR Initiative encourages and supports the proper referencing of copyrighted material to their copyrighted sources.]”

26. Here is one example of evidence which leads to the conclusion stated in “Challenge #2”:

“The global drugs trade and the global arms trade are integral to violence in both developing and industrialized countries. Even modest progress on either front will contribute to reducing the amount and degree of violence suffered by millions of people. To date, however—and despite their high profile in the world arena—no solutions seem to be in sight for these problems.”

From the “World Report on Violence and Health” (World Health Organization Geneva 2002) in Chapter 9 “The Way Forward: Recommendations for Action” p. 254 (at <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2002/9241545615.pdf>) (Accessed June 16, 2007)

27. Daniel Lerch from *Post Carbon Cities: Planning for Energy and Climate Uncertainty (A Guidebook on Peak Oil and Global Warming for Local Governments)* (Free Abridged Version) <http://postcarboncities.net/guidebook> (see “Executive Summary” paragraph 4) Post Carbon Institute 2007 (Accessed August 24, 2007).

Here also are two references which provide additional details about the urgency associated with “dramatically reducing global carbon emissions”:

From “Zero Carbon Britain”, a document from the Centre for Alternative Technology (UK) From section “Executive Summary” (paragraphs 1 and 2) (p. 12) at <http://www.zerocarbonbritain.com/images/zerocarbonbritain.pdf> (Accessed August 18, 2007)

“This report is the Centre for Alternative Technology’s considered response to the current understanding of the global climate.

“Two things have changed in recent years.

- The international scientific consensus on the causes and gravity of climate change has moved from ‘perhaps’ to ‘certainly’.
- A number of significant positive feedbacks have been identified in the climate system. Their effect is such that humanity’s greenhouse gas emissions will act merely as a trigger for much greater and more rapid climatic changes.”

From the website of “Transition Culture” at www.transitionculture.org (from Rob Hopkins notes from a talk by the director of the “Zero Carbon Britain” project, Paul Allen) (see <http://transitionculture.org/2007/08/10/cats-zero-carbon-britain-report>) (paragraph 4) (Accessed August 18, 2007)

“Paul Allen: The Government argues for 60% cuts by 2050, this will not do the job that climate scientists tell us we need to do. Our emissions are a detonator, a trigger, creating larger and larger feedback loops, for example, sea absorbs heat better than ice, and warming seas release methane hydrates, which have a far higher impact on climate. To avoid runaway feedbacks, we need zero carbon in 20 years. Alongside the climate challenge is peak oil. We’ve got through half of the world’s total reserves in 150 years. Another pressing issue is global equity. It is morally unacceptable that the rich get richer while the poor get poorer.”

28. From the “Hirsch Report” [“The Peaking of World Oil Production: Impacts, Mitigation and Risk Management”—Project Leader: Robert L. Hirsch (SAIC) Commissioned by the Department of Energy, and dated February, 2005] [Accessible at the website of Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD)(USA) at www.bartlett.house.gov/EnergyUpdates/ (Accessed August 24, 2007)] Note: The first sentence quoted is from the section “Executive Summary” (see paragraph 1 on p. 4) The second sentence quoted is from the section “Summary and Concluding Remarks” (see Point #3: “Oil Peaking Presents a Unique Challenge”; on p. 64).

Consider also the following quote from Richard Heinberg:

“The human community’s central task for the coming decades must be the undoing of its dependence on oil, coal, and natural gas in order to deal with the twin crises of resource depletion and climate chaos. It is surely fair to say that fossil fuel dependency constitutes a systemic problem of a kind and scale that no society has ever had to address before. If we are to deal with this challenge successfully, we must engage in systemic thinking that leads to sustained, bold action.”

From Richard Heinberg's Museletter #184 titled "A View from Oil's Peak" (at <http://www.richardheinberg.com/museletter/184>) (from closing paragraph) (Accessed September 6, 2007) (from Richard Heinberg's website at <http://www.richardheinberg.com/>) [Note: Richard Heinberg is widely acknowledged as one of the world's foremost Peak Oil educators. He is a journalist, educator, editor, lecturer, and a Core Faculty member of New College of California, where collaborative efforts between faculty, students, and a variety of other "stakeholders" are creating models for "Powerdown" efforts at the regional and community level. Some of the books he has written: *The Party's Over: Oil, War, and the Fate of Industrial Societies*; *Powerdown*; *The Oil Depletion Protocol: A Plan to Avert Wars, Terrorism, and Economic Collapse*; and *Peak Everything: Waking Up to a Century of Declines*"]

[Additional Note: Less and less availability of cheap oil will directly impact much more of the infrastructure of modern industrial society than most of us can easily imagine. (For some examples, see "The Oil Crash and You" by Bruce Thomson at www.oilcrash.com/roe.htm Note: Bruce Thomson is a technical writer in New Zealand, and moderator of the RunningonEmpty2 Internet Discussion Forum, which assisted in creating the document.)]

29. From pre-conference information for "Teach In: Confronting the Global Triple Crises—Climate Change, Peak Oil (The End of Cheap Energy), and Global Resource Depletion and Extinction" (September 14-17, 2007 at The George Washington University Lisner Auditorium in Washington D.C.) Sponsored by The International Forum on Globalization (www.ifg.org) and The Institute on Policy Studies (with other co-sponsors) From Teach-In Flyer and Draft Program at http://www.ifg.org/events/Triple_Crisis_Speakers.pdf (see p. 2)

30. Consider the following statistics and observations:

"In 1800, only 3% of the world's population lived in urban areas."
"In 1900, almost 14% of the world's population lived in urban areas."
"In 1950, 30% of the world's population lived in urban areas. 83 cities had 1 million or more inhabitants."
"In 2000, about 47% of the world's population lived in urban areas. 411 cities had 1 million or more inhabitants."

(from website of Population Reference Bureau-- see <http://www.prb.org/Educators/TeachersGuides/HumanPopulation/Urbanization.aspx>) (see paragraphs one and two) (Accessed June 9, 2007)

From "Revisiting Carrying Capacity: Area Based Indicators of Sustainability", by William E. Rees, 1996, (at www.dieoff.org/page110.htm) (Accessed June 9, 2007) (Especially in light of the activity necessary to overcome the challenges of global warming and "peak oil"....)

"Cities necessarily appropriate the ecological output and life support functions of distant regions all over the world through commercial trade and the natural biogeochemical cycles of energy and material. Indeed, the annual flows of natural income required by

any defined population can be called its ‘appropriated carrying capacity.’ Since for every material flow there must be a corresponding land/ecosystem source or sink, the total area of land/water required to sustain these flows on a continuous basis is the true ‘ecological footprint’ of the referent population on the Earth.” [see section “Appropriating Carrying Capacity and Ecological Footprints” (paragraph 5)]

“... as a result of high population densities, the enormous increase in per capita energy and material consumption made possible by (and required by) technology, and universally increasing dependencies on trade, the ecological locations of human settlements no longer coincide with their geographic locations. Twentieth century cities and industrial regions are dependent for survival and growth on a vast and increasingly global hinterland of ecologically productive landscapes.” [see section “Appropriating Carrying Capacity and Ecological Footprints” (paragraph 4)]

and the following statistics--

From Press Release (August 13, 2002) “Londoners Running Up Massive Debt on Earth’s Resources” at www.citylimitslondon.com/city_limits_press_release.htm
(Accessed June 10, 2007)

“Forty one per cent of the Ecological Footprint (2.80 gha) is accounted for by the food Londoners eat.... In total, London consumes 6.9 million tones of food (per year), more than three quarters of which is imported. London throws away 560,000 tonnes of food (per year) as waste.”

About the Writer of This Essay

Stefan Pasti has been actively involved in peacebuilding and community revitalization work for over 20 years—as a writer (project-related correspondence, short novel, short story); an editor (newsletters, quotation collections); an advocate of ecologically sustainable communities; a practitioner of voluntary simplicity; and, more recently, as founder and outreach coordinator for The Interfaith Peacebuilding and Community Revitalization (IPCR) Initiative (www.ipcri.net). Mr. Pasti has been employed in many different settings—door-to-door canvasser for citizen action groups; field worker on organic farms; activity director, companion, and transportation provider for elders with special needs; etc. The most important influence in Mr. Pasti’s life has been, and continues to be, the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba (age 80, with a main residence in Puttaparthi, India). In 1997, Mr. Pasti completed a 301 page arrangement of selected quotations from “Sathya Sai Speaks” (Vol. 1-11, first U.S. editions) (discourses by Sri Sathya Sai Baba from the years 1953-1982).