

Faith as social capital: Religion and community development in Southern Asia

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[W]estern donors just do not grasp the deep spiritual and cultural dimensions necessary for real development and what these mean for the people. In essence, for western donors, non-conformity with so-called normal patterns of materialistic development is not permissible.'

Ariyaratne (1995a), p. 12

A. T. Ariyaratne's contention that a preoccupation with the material and financial dimensions of development can undermine its spiritual and cultural dimensions may sound somewhat romantic and impractical. His Sarvodaya Movement, however, based on the philosophy that the material improvement of communities is merely a means to their spiritual awakening, is one of the world's largest and most effective community development organizations. Most villages in Sri Lanka have had some contact with and been benefited by Sarvodaya community development work. The Sarvodaya Movement is tremendously popular in Sri Lanka, largely because it seeks to facilitate spiritual awakening through community and economic empowerment (Bond, 1996).

Under what circumstances can faith serve as the basis of social capital formation? Social capital arises in a variety of manners – as a response to the perception of a common threat, as feelings of duty, respect, and loyalty, or as norms of solidarity or service. Given the affective character of many of these social bonds, it is somewhat surprising that little attention has been devoted to faith as the basis for social capital formation. Few studies give detailed attention to the origin, expression, or maintenance of religious norms or to the relationship of public policy to religion. Indeed, most studies of social capital formation – as well as studies of collective action and community development, which often examine social capital formation using different terminology – focus on instrumental motivations as the basis for social capital formation. This chapter does not focus on any of the variety of instrumental mechanisms for building the social capital that encourages individuals to trust other individuals. Rather this chapter focuses on the principles that promote cooperation and trust as a good in itself.

The reasons for the neglect of norms and principled motives in the study of social capital formation, community development, and collective action, are worth noting. Many social scientists see in religious conviction an eclipse of

reason and in religious motivation a constraint on enlightened social behavior. Buttressing these perspectives is the observation that religious identity and religious differences are often seemingly the sources of prejudice and violence. In each of the countries considered in this chapter – Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand – militant religious ideologies have promoted horrific violence against religious minority communities and atheists, especially communists. In Indonesia, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka such religious violence is on the rise. Thus, in much social science literature there is an aversion to treating religion as the basis for progressive social solidarity.

Further, the kind of social bonds promoted by religious sentiments may not always be conducive to social capital formation. Robert Putnam's analysis of social capital formation in Southern Italy suggests that Catholicism is a poor foundation for social capital. Putnam finds that church attendance is inversely related to participation in civic associations.

Organized religion, at least in Catholic Italy, is an alternative to the civic community, not a part of it. ...Church-goers ... seem more concerned about the city of God than the city of man. ... In today's Italy, ... the civic community is a secular community (Putnam, 1993: pp. 107–109).

It may not be appropriate, as Putnam himself suggests, to generalize from Catholicism as embraced and practiced in contemporary Southern Italy to other regions, or other religions. Catholics and Protestants in Latin America have been at the forefront of grassroots activism for social change (Escobar, 1997). This chapter examines how the establishment of a state religion affects the manner in which religious values may be the basis for binding people together in developing Asia.

Many studies of collective action pose problems defined by the presumption that individuals pursue competing interests in a world where the satisfaction of these interests is in short supply. To define institutions as regulations that affect individual cost-benefit calculations and to focus on the defection of individuals are the analytical keys to some of the best-known theories of collective action (e.g., Olson, 1965). But these keys are not useful to the task of examining faith as a basis for social capital. Faith-based social capital is grounded in beliefs, customs, habits, and obligations that are not seriously threatened by individual defection. Social institutions – formally or informally established patterns of behavior – that are based on belief in the duty to submit to the will of Allah or belief in the wisdom of taking refuge in the Dharma, for example, are not diminished by defection. Understanding faith as the basis for social solidarity is therefore not aided by a definition of social institutions such that free-riding individuals may undermine them.

Nongovernmental organizations have been promoted with increasing frequency as agents of community and rural development and, more recently, as agents of social capital formation (e.g., Krishna, Uphoff, and Esman 1997; Fernando and Heston, 1997; Buckland, 1998). In Asia, religious associations

and individuals with religious convictions operate thousands of NGOs. While data are not available, it is quite likely that a higher percentage of family income is contributed to social welfare groups in Buddhist and Muslim Asian societies, despite the absence of tax incentives, than in European and North American societies. Buddhists and Muslims devote significant amounts of their income to private social welfare organizations.

This chapter focuses on religious contributions to the formation of social capital through NGOs.¹ The specific emphasis is the impact of the institution of a civic religion on the effectiveness of faith-based community development. How significant to progressive social capital formation are the values of the organizers and of the involved community? How significant is a linkage of programs to community norms? Under what conditions do religious organizations help to promote levels of social capital that generate higher levels of education, literacy, health, employment, and other public goods that increase social opportunity?

Specific questions emerge from the fact that relations between religious associations and the state can have a strong influence on the ability of organizations to generate social capital for community development. How does the policy environment toward religion and religious organizations affect the character of religious organizations and the extent and character of their involvement in community development? Why have some religious organizations been more active in effecting progressive social change than others? Why are religious ideas likely to be used by NGOs to promote community development in some places while avoided in others – for example, Buddhist institutions in Thailand and Islamic institutions in Pakistan are thought by many community development activists to be anathema to social change, while Buddhist institutions in Sri Lanka and Islamic institutions in Indonesia are embraced by community development activists and interpreted as supportive of community empowerment. Under what conditions do religious organizations help promote higher levels of education, literacy, health, and social opportunity, particularly for girls and women?

This chapter aims to assess the meaning of development as it is understood and put into practice by four religious associations. Each of these associations operates nonprofit, voluntary development organizations. The Nahdlatul Ulama [Revival of Islamic Scholars] is an association of Indonesian Muslims and was formerly a political party. The Jamaat-i-Islami [Gathering of Muslims] is Pakistan's largest socioreligious movement and religious political party. The Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya [Sri Lankan Movement for the Awakening of All through Donation of Labor] is one of the world's largest community development organizations. The Santi Asok [Peace without Suffering] is a new, rapidly growing commune-based Buddhist movement in Thailand. Each of these is a membership support organization (Carroll, 1992: pp. 9–15). Members determine the orientation and rules of their association. While each of these associations has outreach emphases, each works principally for the benefit of its members and followers.

By considering the nonprofit sector in Islamic societies where political and economic regimes differ from those of the Middle East, we can parse religious, cultural, political, and economic factors in the formation of social capital through the nonprofit sector. The same can be done by examining Buddhist community development organizations under the differing political regimes in Sri Lanka and Thailand. Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand host markedly different religious traditions and political regimes. Differences between government policies toward religion, in general, and toward these religious associations, in particular, help to identify policies that promote social capital formation through religious NGOs.

State and faith-based development

The degree to which individuals working in community development describe their work in religious or secular terms is clearly distinct by country. Expressions of faith among development activists, organizers, and professionals reveal a discernible pattern. For this study, interviews were conducted with more than one hundred community development activists, religious leaders, founders and directors of nongovernmental organizations, newspaper and magazine editors, journalists, academics, researchers, and government officials. In Thailand and Pakistan, where state legitimacy rests heavily on a civic religion, few social activists, NGO leaders, or development professionals consider religious associations to be even potentially effective, in community development and social change. The state is viewed as having appropriated religion for the justification of its own programs. In Indonesia and Sri Lanka, where the state is partial to the majority religion but does not endorse a civic religion, many community development activists and organizers report that religious associations are effective in community development and social change and that their faith provides significant motivation for their activities. Indeed, in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, in marked contrast to Pakistan and Thailand, many development activists and organizers question the possibility of a secular approach to economic and social development. Evidence drawn from the case studies of the religious associations in the four countries, likewise, suggests that relations between religion and the state have a strong influence on the ability of faith-based NGOs to generate social capital for community development. Seemingly, states that institute a civic religion negatively influence the degree to which faith-based NGOs development organizations and people with religious convictions are involved in social change.

Differences in the Indonesian and Pakistani environments for social action highlight the importance of the political arena to the character of social action by religious associations. In Pakistan, Islam has often been used by governments as a conservative and obscurant force. The deployment of Islamic rhetoric and manipulation of Islamic principles in the political history of Pakistan is extensive. Ironically, revealed faiths are particularly susceptible to textually literal

claims. The state's capacity in Pakistan to impose professedly Islamic regulations for its own material and bureaucratic interest is well illustrated by the official collection of *zakat* [a voluntary contribution to the needy]. One of the pillars of Islam is that Allah's generosity should be shared with the poor. The *Zakat and Ushr* [a tax on landed wealth] Ordinance of 1980 permits the Government of Pakistan to deduct 2.5% from bank deposits and stock market earnings. *Zakat* collections have increased steeply since their inception in 1980. In 1993–1994, the latest year for which figures are available, the Government of Pakistan collected Rs. 1.75 billion in *zakat* (Sayeed and Ghaus, July 1996). Thirty-two thousand local *zakat* committees distribute these funds (Iqbal, 1986: p. 122). *Zakat*, to be distributed to *mustahiqeen* [Muslim widows, orphans, and disabled people], is widely misappropriated. The Pakistani public widely resents being forced to perform an article of faith and objects to the highly politicized use of funds by local *zakat* committees. Thus there are mass withdrawals from private savings accounts when *zakat* deductions are made, just before Ramadan. In Indonesia, in contrast, where the population is also predominantly Muslim, the state does not make *zakat* collection mandatory and many Indonesians gladly make contributions voluntarily (Abdullah, 1991).

Political leaders have managed until recently (Nakamura, 1999) to minimize the influence of Islamic organizations and ideology in formal politics. Both General Sukarno, who ruled Indonesia from its independence in 1945 until his removal in 1966, and General Suharto, who ruled from 1966 until 1998, successfully managed to minimize the degree to which appeals to Islam were used to justify state policies. Sukarno appeased the movement for declaring Indonesia an Islamic state in 1945 by promoting the *Pancasila* [Five Principles] as the state ideology. The first principle of the *Pancasila* – which remains the official ideology of the state even after the rise to power of Muslim political parties and a Muslim scholar, Abdurrahman Wahid, as President – is the belief in one God. The *Pancasila* does not specify, to the displeasure of some Muslim organizations, which God.

Nahdlatul Ulama

The Nahdlatul Ulama is the world's largest Muslim organization. Javanese religious scholars founded the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) as a socioreligious movement in January 1926. It soon distinguished itself as a force for the promotion of traditional Sunni Islamic values, thought, and practice, in distinction from Muslim modernists who sought to reform Indonesian Islam and to remove what they considered to be un-Islamic and syncretically derived local practices and beliefs.

The NU is a mass-based organization, with an estimated 35 million followers. The lifeblood of the organization is the network of *kyai* [local religious scholars] and *pesantren* [Islamic boarding schools]. *Kyai* have 'enormous prestige and power in the countryside,' derived from their direction of the *pesantren* (Geertz,

1960: p. 230). *Kyai* are widely consulted and highly respected for spiritual and religious matters as well as for matters concerning health, career, family, and community. Parents, especially NU members, send their children to *pesantren* for religious education. There are between 7,000 and 8,000 *pesantren*, concentrated in Java, Indonesia's most densely populated island, and approximately 10,000 *kyai* in Indonesia, who have trained more than 3 million *santri* [*pesantren* students] (Mas'udi, 1999). Community respect for *kyai* and for the institution of the *pesantren*, which serve both as places for religious teaching and as community centers, enables NU-associated NGOs to be effective in community development.

To explain their outlook and motivation for community development activities, NU members often refer to Rahmatan-lil-Alamin. Rahmatan-lil-Alamin is the blessing bestowed by Allah on the entire universe. According to NU organizers, all of the organization's activities are based on the recognition that Allah's blessings belong to everyone, without regard to religion or race. The former General Chairman of the NU, Abdurrahman Wahid, new President of the Republic of Indonesia, and other NU members also refer to the Qulliat al-Khomsa to explain their political philosophy (Wahid, 1998). Qulliat al-Khomsa are the five principles, or basic human rights, derived by Imam Al Ghazali from the Quran and the Hadith. These are the right to one's religion (*hifdz al deem*); the right to think for oneself (*hifdz al hakim*); the right to life (*hifdz al nafis*); the right to livelihood and to a profession (*hifdz al amal*); and the right to have a family (*hifdz al nasil*). The Qulliat al-Khomsa was adopted by the NU at its quinquennial Mukhtamar [General Convention] in 1994 held in Cipasung, West Java.

When Wahid accepted leadership of the NU at the Mukhtamar in 1984, the NU decided to leave formal politics and return to its roots. That decision, known as the *Khittah 1926*, in reference to the founding of the NU in 1926, marked the end of three decades of direct involvement in politics and a corresponding reduction of the organization's social power. Between 1953 and 1971 – extending from Indonesia's early period of electoral competition, through President Sukarno's Guided Democracy, and into President Suharto's New Order – the General Chairman of the NU was also appointed Minister for Religious Affairs. In 1984, the NU shifted its focus from politics to social development. The decision, charted by then General Chairman Wahid, to withdraw from formal politics – that is, to withdraw from the amalgamation of Muslim political parties, the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP), created by Suharto – and to return to its socioreligious roots enabled NU activists to be more effective in community development. While the NU has been drawn back into politics by the fall of President Suharto's New Order, it remains committed to empowering the poor over consolidating political power. The NU, at its General Convention, held in 1999 in Kediri, East Java, reaffirmed its 1984 commitment to stay outside of formal politics and its intention to maintain a clear distinction between the PKB and the NU. Officials of the PKB, for example, are not permitted to hold office in the NU.

Directed by a central board in Jakarta and provincial boards in each of Indonesia's 26 provinces, the NU has both informally affiliated organizations and formally affiliated organizations. Organizational affiliates, such as Ikatan Putri-Putri, Fatayat, and Muslimat (associations of NU girls, younger women, and older women, respectively), are composed of NU members and report to the NU plenary, but have no formal role in the NU hierarchy. Muslimat is an important association within the NU. It was founded in March 1946 to 'improve the well-being and status of Muslim women.' (Tristiawati and Munir, 1995: p. 2). The wives of *kyai* are often the provincial leaders within the Muslimat. There are ten such autonomous organizations affiliated to the NU. It is revealing of the social solidarity within the NU that these organizations are typically referred to as being part of the NU family.

Other organizations within the formal structure of the NU, such as the Lembaga Kemaslahatan Keluarga (LKK) (Family Welfare Institute) and the Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumberdaya Manusia (LAKPESDAM) (Institute for Studies and Human Resource Development), are administered by the provincial committees of the NU, not by the central board in Jakarta. There are twelve such formal *lembaga* [institutions]. The LPPNU and LPNU, for example, coordinate NU activities in the fields of employment generation and rural development. One of the organizations formed within the formal structure of the NU was the LKK (Family Welfare Institute). LKK was founded in December 1977 to promote family welfare, largely through reproductive health and family planning, by the Yayasan Kesejahteraan Muslimat (Women's Welfare Foundation), an institution established and operated by Muslimat. Previously, family welfare activities of the NU were coordinated by the Yayasan Kesejahteraan Muslimat. The LKK conducts training programs for health care workers, works with domestic and international governmental and non-governmental agencies, and produces and distributes pamphlets and books on reproductive health. One of the truly remarkably accomplishments of the LKK, achieved with the help of the association of young NU women, Fatayat, was reinterpretation of the Quran and Hadith that lead to a *fatwa* [religious opinion] in favor of family planning, including specific kinds of tubal ligations and vasectomies (Saifuddin Zuhri et al., 1979; Masyhuri, 2000). International Planned Parenthood and the United Nations Children's Fund have recognized the work of Fatayat and Muslimat as instrumental in promoting reproductive health and raising mother and infant survival rates throughout Indonesia.

Jamaat-i-Islami

The Jamaat-i-Islami was formed in the north of British India in 1941 under the guidance of theologian Mawlana Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi (Nasr, 1996). The partition of British India and creation of Pakistan in 1947 powerfully influenced the character of the Jamaat-i-Islami. Partition and the creation of Pakistan not only raised questions about the role that Islam should play in Pakistan. The

creation of Pakistan also drew Jamaat-i-Islami supporters to Pakistan from areas that were to become independent India. That its supporters were largely migrants who would settle in urban areas of Pakistan profoundly influenced the character of the organization and its social power. Unlike the NU, the membership of the Jamaat-i-Islami is predominantly urban, not rural.

The Jamaat-i-Islami questioned the All India Muslim League's demand in the early 1940s for the creation of Pakistan as an independent state for South Asian Muslims. The Jamaat-i-Islami's reservation rested on 'the ability of those who sought to represent (Islam),' namely Mohammad Ali Jinnah, President of the All India Muslim League (Mawdudi, 1975, cited in Nasr, 1994: pp. 19, 229). After the partition of British India, the Jamaat-i-Islami transformed itself into a political party, in the expectation that the creation of Pakistan would confer political authority on theologians. However, it has fared poorly at the polls and had its greatest political influence only under the martial law regime of General Zia ul Haq. The Jamaat-i-Islami has not taken a formal decision to keep away from electoral politics, but opted not to contest the national and provincial assembly elections held in 1995 and 1997. Critics of the Jamaat-i-Islami often note its poor electoral performance (Sayeed, 1997: p. 121). As the organization does not seek to satisfy voters and is openly distrustful of democratic decision-making, its poor performance at the polls is actually quite unremarkable.

Government negligence is a common theme in Jamaat-i-Islami explanations for their social welfare work. Much of the popular appeal of the Jamaat-i-Islami derives from persuasive criticism of government negligence, corruption, misappropriation of funds intended for Islamic welfare, and undue influence of the United States government in Pakistan's domestic affairs. The Jamaat-i-Islami has not altogether failed to achieve its aim of creating an Islamic state. It has been instrumental in promoting Islamic law in Pakistan. The Jamaat-i-Islami has also had considerable influence as a pressure group, especially in the movement that brought down Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977. The Jamaat-i-Islami continues to exercise considerable political influence through its student organizations. The Jamaat-i-Islami's Islami Jamiat-i-Talaba (IJT) [Islamic Council of Students] is the most powerful student association in Pakistan.

The Jamaat-i-Islami claims to have 4.5 million members and claims responsibility for the social welfare of the entire *ummat* [Muslim community] in Pakistan. Jamaat-i-Islami community development activities focus on religious education, family services, including financial assistance with weddings and funerals, and health care. Its Kidmat [Service] Committee runs approximately 90 *madaris* [Islamic boarding schools], provides stipends to poor students and funds for the marriage of daughters from poor families, and operates homeopathic clinics, allopathic dispensaries, and a coffin-carrying service for families in poor areas. The Kidmat Committee recently constructed a community hospital in Karachi's Orangi town.

The Jamaat-i-Islami emphasizes education of young people so as to favorably influence them toward Jamaat-i-Islami thinking. It operates both *madaris* and

private schools. The latter, using a government recognized curriculum and holding government recognized examinations, are different from Jamaat-i-Islami-run *madaris*.² There are now more than four thousand *madaris* in Pakistan. Unlike the *pesantren*, which developed out of a Hindu-Buddhist tradition (Geertz, 1960: p. 231), the *madaris* are derived from classical Islam. In most, the Dars-i-Nizami system, a curriculum developed by Alim Mulla Naseer-u-Din, is used. The curriculum has been only slightly revised since its creation in 1064 (Khan, 1997: p. 23). Today, there may be as many as 2,000 schools with some Jamaat-i-Islami affiliation (Ahmed, 1999).

Differences between the typically urban-based *madaris* and typically rural-based *pesantren* education reflect differences in character of the *ulema* in the NU (*kyai*) and the Jamaat-i-Islami. The NU is based upon a network of *kyai* who operate Islamic boarding schools, whereas the Jamaat-i-Islami is more a network of Islamic scholars, who may not operate their own schools. The *ulema* of Pakistan are colorfully described by one Pakistani scholar:

The flame of Islam is kept alive by a strange breed of committed men, the 'Ulema,' Islamic men of learning, who keep on nostalgically recalling the past and see to it that the furnace of Islam's emotions never runs short of fuel. Whatever they may lack in knowledge, they make up by their unflinching faith, unbending consistency and impassioned oratory (Azam, 1988: p. 219).

Doctrinal purity and a God-fearing society is prized by Jamaat-i-Islami *ulema*, whereas discussion, debate, and acceptance of ideological differences is highly valued among the *kyai* of the NU. Thus, while in Indonesia under the tutelage of a *kyai*, 'villagers ... come to think of themselves ... as more pious' (Geertz, 1960: p. 233), in Pakistan, in the glare of *ulema* criticism of Western liberalism and their injunctions against lapses of observances of faith, many Muslims tend to think of themselves as less than pious. Not all Islamic organizations have had as difficult a time in forming social capital for community development in Pakistan. The Aga Khan network, a Muslim association working in Pakistan and throughout the Muslim world, and especially in the northwestern areas, where Pakistan's Ismaelies, followers of the Aga Khan, are concentrated. The Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) has won wide recognition for effective social action for human development in the region (World Bank, 1996).

In an environment in which religion has been highly politicized, however, it is not surprising that few development organizations have made use of Islamic values to generate cooperation or trust within the communities in which they work. It is revealing of the impact of government policy on social movements and NGOs that the NGO movement in Pakistan received its greatest stimulus from the Islamicization campaign of General Zia ul Haq in 1979, when a number of NGOs formed to promote gender equality along Western feminist lines. As General Zia's professedly Islamic ordinances were designed to reduce

women's legal standing, as many as one third of registered NGOs in Pakistan today focus on women's rights (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). NGOs there, however, have not generally been adept at demonstrating that Islam can be a resource for women's empowerment as their counterparts in Indonesia have.

The earliest significant attempt to reconcile governance in Pakistan with Islam, the Objectives Resolution, foreshadowed a phenomenon – governance that excuses its failings on the basis of its professed commitment to Islam – that hardened under the governments of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Zia ul Haq, Benazir Bhutto, and Nawaz Sharif. The Objectives Resolution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly in 1949 to placate those who demanded that the government of Pakistan adopt the *Shariah* [Muslim law] as the law of the country. The first paragraph of the Objectives Resolution, folded into the 1978 Constitution by General Zia, declares that:

sovereignty over the entire universe belongs to Allah Almighty alone and the authority which He has delegated to the State of Pakistan through its people for being exercised within the limits prescribed by Him is a sacred trust (Government of Pakistan, 1989: p. 211).

The Objectives Resolution clearly declares that sovereignty ultimately belongs to Allah and that Allah has delegated that authority to the Pakistani state. The phrase 'through its people' confuses the question of whether sovereignty derives from the people or from Allah. A number of religious organizations in Pakistan, including the Jamaat-i-Islami, restrict their interpretation of the phrase 'the people' to 'practicing Muslims,' see no conflict in the Objectives Resolution, and strongly approve of it as a basis for governance.

The comparatively greater emphasis on community empowerment by the NU and the greater emphasis on charity by the Jamaat-i-Islami is in part a result of differing levels of socioeconomic development in Indonesia and Pakistan. The socioeconomic infrastructure in Pakistan, especially in rural Sindh, is miserable. Schools, clinics, hospitals, and roads are few and generally of wretched quality in most (Candland, 2000). In rural Java, in contrast, the infrastructure required to meet basic human needs – education, health, and access to schools and clinics – is well developed. Much of the variation in the kind of community development activities performed privately in Sindh and in Java can be ascribed to differences in socioeconomic condition. However, the two other religious-based organizations under study – the Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya in Sri Lanka and the Santi Asok in Thailand – suggest that it is not the provision of social infrastructure alone that influences the character and degree of involvement of religious associations in social welfare, development, and empowerment. In Thailand, where the infrastructure is better developed and real incomes are higher than in Sri Lanka, there is, as in Pakistan, notably more emphasis on provision of services and less on community empowerment. As the cases of the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Jamaat-i-Islami suggest, it seems in Sri Lanka as in Thailand that the promotion of a state religion, not the

state's provision or neglect of social infrastructure alone, tends to undermine the ability of religious organizations to engage in community empowerment activities.

Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya

Sri Lanka has a rich tradition of social service. Many Sri Lankan social reformers are motivated by their faith, considering social welfare work, charity, and the donation of labor for community uplift to be a vehicle for their own enlightenment and that of society. The Sarvodaya Movement, as it is commonly called, exemplifies that tradition. It is one of the world's largest and most effective nongovernmental development organizations and quite overtly has a spiritual purpose. Rather than seeing religion as an instrument by which to gain the trust of villagers so that economic development programs can be implemented, the Sarvodaya Movement sees activities to improve material well-being as a vehicle for enlightenment. The Sarvodaya Movement aims to inculcate among its workers love for the people with whom they work and respect for traditional social norms.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement began in 1958, when A. T. Ariyaratne, a young teacher at the Nalanda College, a prestigious Buddhist high school, involved his students in a two-week community development project in Kanatoluwa, an impoverished lower-caste village. Ariyaratne had visited India, met with disciples of Mohandas Gandhi, including Vinoba Bhave, and was deeply impressed by Sarvodayan community uplift activities in India. Ariyaratne and especially D. A. Abeysekere, a partner and rural development professional and participant in the work in Kanatoluwa, were also inspired by the work camps established by Quakers in war-torn Europe (Macy, 1983: p. 29). The Nalanda College Shramadana Volunteers worked with the villagers of Kanatoluwa to identify collectively the most pressing needs of the village and then to build latrines, wells, and a school. The village uplift activities were so successful that within a few years the Movement attracted thousands of volunteers and hundreds of invitations to work in other villages (Ariyaratne, 1978: p. 55). Since its beginning in Kanatoluwa, the Movement has organized work camps in more than half of Sri Lanka's 24,000 villages. Millions of Sri Lankans have been involved in Sarvodaya activities since its founding in 1958 (Ariyaratne, 1995b: p. 154).

The Shramadana work camp is the practical mechanism for the Sarvodaya Movement's community development. A Sarvodaya facilitator visits a village, upon invitation, to stimulate the collective articulation of local needs. Villagers from other places that have hosted work camps then arrive to live, work, and eat together with villagers in new Shramadana villages. Members of the work camps meet three times each day in 'family gathering' to collectively plan projects and arrive at decisions by consensus. The filial organization is intended to foster feelings of kinship. 'First and foremost,' according to Ariyaratne, 'is

helping the village community to come together at a psychological level where they begin to feel as members of one large family' (Ariyaratne, 1996: p. 111).

The Sarvodaya Movement attempts to foster feelings of self-worth and self-reliance, focusing on the psychology of empowerment rather than material advancement. The Sarvodaya Movement has served thousands villages through the sharing of labor and knowledge, in community-conceived and community-based activities. This sharing, if performed with a devotion and social engagement that promotes local participation, is thought to advance not only the social welfare of the concerned community, but also the spiritual awakening of both the community and facilitators. According to Ariyaratne, awakening can only be achieved in stages, beginning with the individual, and proceeding to the village, and eventually, to the country and the world.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya's models of the Decadent Village and the Sarvodaya Village encapsulate its philosophy. The Decadent Village involves a vicious cycle involving disease, poverty, economic stagnation, conflict, oppression, and harsh speech. The Sarvodaya Village involves a virtuous cycle relying on health, education, and economic, spiritual, cultural, and organizational development. The focus of the development mechanism is on personal psychology. Thus, the foundation of Sarvodaya development is personal change. Sarvodaya work camps are designed to encourage four principles that are believed to be inherent in Sri Lankan culture. These are *metta* [loving kindness to all], *karuna* [compassionate action], *muditha* [altruistic joy], and *upekkha* [mental balance and equanimity] (Ariyaratne, 1978: p. 102). Village reawakening is dependent upon such personal mental awakening.

Underdevelopment or suffering is thought to be dependent upon undesirable and correctable psychological states, such as ill will and possessiveness, while development and removal of suffering is achieved through love and selflessness. While over a thousand monks are involved in Sarvodaya activities and their participation has reportedly helped to revitalize the *Sangha* [union of monks] (Ariyaratne, 6 July 1999; Macy, 1983: pp. 64–73), it is not only the involvement of religious figures but also the application of religious norms that makes the Movement effective in building social capital. Given the Sarvodaya Movement's emphasis on awakening, psychology, and self-worth, criticism that it does not fully apply its reservoir of good will to economic development may be misplaced.

Further, the Sarvodaya Movement has been instrumental in promoting maternal and infant health in Sri Lanka, through Mothers' and Children's Groups. The first Sarvodaya groups to be formed in Sarvodaya villages are Children's Groups. These groups manage preschools, libraries, and activities for younger children. When mothers enroll their children in these preschools, they become members of the Mothers' Group, which involves them in health and nutritional programs (Macy, 1983: p. 80). In this way, the preschools form the basis of Sarvodaya social work. Mothers' Groups provide instruction in the 'proper bringing up of children, home improvement, religious work, moral reawakening and activities to supplement the family income' (Ariyaratne, 1978:

p. 65). As significant to the effectiveness of the Movement as the central role of women has been the involvement of youth. Not only do Sarvodaya work camps, like the first one in Kanatoluwa, involve youth, but also the preschool centers serve as community centers where child care, nutritional, educational, and community programs are held. The Movement has also created a number of national institutes. These include the Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services, which provides entrepreneurship and management training; the Suwa Seth Seva Society, which operates homes for orphans, women in crisis, and the disabled; and the Samodaya Seva Institute, which provides services to street children, young criminals, and drug addicts.

Santi Asok

Unlike Sri Lanka, where the Sarvodaya movement's coverage is extensive, there is no nationwide religious organization engaged in community development in Thailand. Given the strength of Buddhism in Thai society, this is somewhat surprising. A number of notable individual monks have committed themselves to community empowerment. *Pra anuraksa* [conservation monks], such as the celebrated Pra Prajak Khuttajitto, are well known for helping villagers resist commercial incursions into common forest lands (Taylor, 1993b; Sanitsuda, 1994). In 1980, the military forcefully relocated forest dwellers whom it had earlier armed and settled in sensitive border areas in an effort to undermine the communist insurgency in the area. In 1984, the Royal Forestry Department allowed a private company to log the existing forest and to cultivate eucalyptus, a fast-growing hardwood with little value for the environment, on the land from which the settlers were moved. Pra Prajak helped organize the resistance. One of his methods was sanctifying trees by ordaining them. The ritual transforms the trees from the 'untamed and uncivilized domain into sacred and venerated religious artifacts' (Taylor, 1993: p. 11). The ceremony, acknowledging the living spirit of the tree, encourages villagers and loggers alike to appreciate the lives of the trees and to question the need for the commercial exploitation of forests. Other monks are also active in social activism in Thailand. But while individual monks have been involved in community activism, few religious groups are active in community activism or community development. Most of those that are faith-based are connected to a single social activist, Sulak Sivaraksa, and his Spirit in Education Movement (Swearer, 1996).

When Thai monks assist local communities to stand up for their rights, they are discredited by the government and by the Buddhist hierarchy. Monks in Thailand are prohibited from political activism, even from voting. Nevertheless, the *Sangha* has a close relationship to state power. The monarchy has successfully deployed Thai Buddhism as a national civic religion, and the *Sangha* is closely allied to the state bureaucracy (Reynolds, 1977). Indeed, the nationalist character of the *Sangha* has encouraged political activism by right-wing monks, while anti-establishment and left-oriented socially engaged monks have been

arrested and disrobed. *Bhikku* [monk] Kitthiwuttho, for example, in a widely circulated pamphlet, asserted that it was not a sin to kill communists and promoted violence with impunity, without sanction or condemnation from the *Sangha* (Kitthiwuttho, 1976). Meanwhile, the *Sangha* has opposed leftist movements as threatening to the nation, to the monarchy, and to religion (Somboon, 1984).

If fundamentalism is the strict embrace of basic principles, Thailand's most fundamentalist Buddhist organization is the Santi Asok. Founded in 1976 by former radio personality Pra Bodhirak, the Santi Asok has established seven villages and community centers in Thailand (Heikkila-Horn, 1997; Taylor, 1993a). Activities at the *asok* [places without suffering] vary, but most do organic farming, including mushroom farming. Villages are on built on wetlands, where soil is laid out and trees are planted. Some *asok* have purchased land. Some have been given use of large tracts of cultivatable acreage by followers. Some villages operate production facilities, including sewing, weaving, mosquito net making, herbal medicine, and herbal tea production facilities. The Ratchatani Asok in the Northeast operates a large rice-husking mill. Some Santi Asok villages maintain medical cooperatives and dental clinics and comprehensive schools. One hosts a small college.

The Santi Asok educates several hundred youth. According to principle, all members are students as well as teachers. While some *asok* operate schools where volunteer teachers instruct students in classrooms, in others the entire village, including the fields and kitchens in which children work, are considered to be the classrooms. Children are selected to study at Santi Asok schools not on the basis of their grades, but according to their willingness to adopt the five Buddhist precepts and to work for the community.

Santi Asok's followers are strict adherents to the Five Precepts, or five Buddhism oaths. These are that one should not kill, lie, steal, or indulge in intoxicants or in illicit sex. In keeping with the first precept, Santi Asok members are strict vegetarians. Members also adhere to the Eight Precepts – involving proper understanding, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. Santi Asok followers are far more attentive than most Thai Buddhists to these precepts. Luxury consumption, they feel, only obstructs people from cultivating the Eight Precepts. Thus, members wear plain denim uniforms, go barefoot, sleep in small wooden huts that they make themselves in forest settings, and live under what others would consider to be austere conditions. Many followers also choose, in accordance with scriptures, to eat no more than one meal per day. Some lay followers maintain small, sparse cottages in Santi Asok villages. According to one prominent Santi Asok member, former Bangkok Governor Chamlong Srimuang, Santi Asok communities are based on the motto 'eat less, spend less, work harder, and sacrifice for the public good' (Chamlong, 1998). Santi Asok members claim that such simplicity makes their lives richer. Santi Asok publications advocate self-sufficiency by reducing need and are critical of capital intensive development (Kwangdee, 1998). With government policy pushing Thailand to become an East Asian tiger, the Thai farmer

has been economically marginalized. The Santi Asok aims to make a virtue of marginalization from the market.

Many Bangkok parents send their children to Santi Asok schools with the intention of cultivating Buddhist values in their children. Santi Asok is particularly strong in rural areas and in the Northeast. In both rural and urban areas, Santi Asok products and services are one of the major dissemination vehicles for the Santi Asok philosophy of self-reliance and minimization of greed. The Santi Asok runs very popular vegetarian kitchens in Bangkok and other cities, based on volunteer labor. Its products, ranging from herbal shampoos to herbal teas, are also very popular and inexpensive.

Because of its popularity, the Santi Asok has faced strong government sanction. In 1995, the Council of Elders tried, convicted, and disrobed Pra Bodhirak, the founder of the Santi Asok, and the monks and nuns whom he ordained. Pra Bodhirak and the monks whom he was found to have ordained without proper authority were sentenced to suspended prison terms for disobeying the *Vinaya* [rules pertaining to the *Sangha*] (Chamnan, 1997: p. 112). The government's treatment of the Santi Asok was likely connected to its association with a reformist political party, the Palang Dhamma [Force of Dharma], organized by Major-General Chamlong Srimuang, a Santi Asok adherent. (Similarly, the close association of government and Monarch allowed General Suchinda to try Sulak Sivaraksha, an outspoken critic of his military government, for defaming the King (Sulak, 1998). The government's treatment of Sulak and the Santi Asok indicates the strength of civic religion in Thailand.) The Santi Asok leader, Pra Bodhirak, lent moral support to the Palang Dhamma, a political party, and its predecessor, the Ruan Palang [United Force], between 1984 until 1995. The party won nearly every seat in the Bangkok Municipal Administration in the 1985 elections and Major-General Chamlong was elected Governor of Bangkok. Palang Dhamma remained significant in Thai politics until it suffered major losses at the polls in 1995 (McCargo, 1997). Since Chamlong's departure from formal politics, the relationship between the Santi Asok and the government has improved considerably. The Santi Asok now runs training programs for senior civil servants. A five-day program organized by Samana Vinayataro, the abbot of the Ratchatani Asok in Ubon Ratchatani province, included lectures on community values and self-sufficiency by Pra Bodhirak. The Santi Asok in Nakhon Sawan province has conducted drug rehabilitation programs for recovering addicts among Thai police officers.

The politics of faith-based social capital

Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen, in their highly regarded study of human development in India, argue that the expansion of social opportunity can not be guaranteed either by government agencies or by market mechanisms alone but rather must be achieved through public action (Drèze and Sen, 1995: pp. 1–8). While they point to the Indian state of Kerala and to its traditions of religious

social service organizations for illustration of how both effective people's organizations and appropriate government policies are necessary for public action (Drèze and Sen, 1995: pp. 197–202), they do not elaborate on the conditions for public action. The case studies discussed here provide clues as to how such conditions may be generated through religious organizations.

Faith can be a form of social capital. A community of believers need not have repeated face-to-face interactions to place trust in one another. A shared faith may allow believers to trust in each other. As a Muslim, one's word is one's guarantee, for all that one thinks, says, and does is known to Allah and will be examined on Judgment Day. In Buddhist thought, happiness is a direct result of one's own compassionate words and deeds toward others, for all sentient beings are thought to have at one time given birth to and cared for every other being. Each of the religious associations considered has sustained social capital through faith. The good will extended by the followers of each association to other followers goes beyond their formal responsibilities as members of a common association.

Each of the four associations, however, uses the social capital of their membership in discernibly different ways. The Jamaat-i-Islami aims to establish a society that is obedient to the social and moral injunctions of an essentialized Islam. The Nahdlatul Ulama aims to promote traditional Islamic values based on human dignity. The Sarvodaya Movement would like to create a society enlightened by recognition of its mutual interconnectedness. The Santi Asok aim is to build self-reliance. Each of these preferences is conditioned by the state's relationship to religious associations. In Thailand, for example, the autonomy of religious groups is highly constrained by the close relationship between the *Sangha* and the monarchy. The king is both the constitutional head of government as well as the protector of the *Sangha* (Tambiah, 1976: pp. 472–514). Thus, it is not surprising that the Santi Asok establishes communes in remote areas where followers concentrate on generating self-sufficiency.

Each of the four associations has had a distinct relationship to formal politics. The Jamaat-i-Islami seeks to achieve its vision of an Islamic society by assuming control of government. Originally, the Jamaat-i-Islami opposed participation in electoral politics. The electoral success of two Jamaat-i-Islami members persuaded the organization that it might successfully contest elections. However, as it has not performed well at the polls, its leadership has realized that it will not gain power through the ballot box. Thus, the Jamaat-i-Islami increasingly appeals to factions of the military and to the intelligence services to declare Pakistan an Islamic state and to enlist itself in governance. The Nahdlatul Ulama, in contrast, learned from its involvement in politics (1971 to 1984) that political power comes at a high cost to social power and popular credibility. Thus, despite the NU-affiliated PKB's electoral successes in 1999, the NU has reaffirmed its decision to keep its distance from formal political involvement and to promote traditional Islamic values through its institutions and affiliate associations. The Sarvodaya Movement has consistently maintained its distance from formal politics. The Santi Asok, once punished by the *Sangha*

for its association with a reformist political party, has since maintained its distance from formal politics.

The institution of a civic religion does not itself explain the character or degree of religious organizations' involvement in community development activities. Nor does it explain the way in which social development is understood or effected by faith-based NGOs. If the governments of Pakistan had not manipulated Islamic tenets to consolidate authoritarian rule, Pakistan would not necessarily have Indonesia's levels of social and human development nor would its faith-based NGOs necessarily have the outlook and engage in the same activities as similar organizations in Indonesia. The manner in which community development is understood by its practitioners and the manner in which these activities are carried out depend as well on social and economic needs. In some places, community development is about building homes and sewage systems; in others, it is generating income and employment or encouraging and equipping people to defend their rights in the face of a repressive social or political system. Moreover, poor educational attainment and widespread illiteracy constrain the range of educational offerings. However, if successive governments of Pakistan had not manipulated Islamic tenets to consolidate rule, then NGOs would likely be more accepting of Islamic tenets, and would likely be more effective. Had Thai Buddhism not been intimately involved in the legitimation of state coercion and of the commodity fetishes that help to drive what once passed for development in Thailand, more organizations would likely be inspired by Buddhist social engagement.

These case studies suggest that public policy toward NGOs can influence the ability of these organizations to activate or stimulate social capital for social development. Government policies can have a significant negative impact on the extent to which religion is accessible as a resource for social development and the expansion of social opportunity (Drèze and Sen, 1995: pp. 6–16). Indeed, government promotion of religion may inhibit faith-based social reform. The socially transformative power of religious institutions and religious principles is seemingly undermined both by governments that attempt to use religious rhetoric to legitimate their policies as well as by religious movements and religious political parties that rely upon the government to promote their strategies for social and political reform. Religious tenets and institutions are seemingly best employed for social change in a political arena in which religion is not already used by governments to legitimate arbitrary or dictatorial rule. State action in the name of religion may, as in Thailand, or may not, as in Pakistan, help promote access to primary education and to basic education. Efforts to establish a state religion, however, do not promote an environment in which faith-based NGOs can help enhance social opportunity. NGOs that are rooted in religiously articulated programs for social reform can be particularly effective at community development and build social capital, especially in political environments in which the state does not promote a civic religion.

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Notes

1. A methodological problem in measuring the effectiveness of nongovernmental development activities is that the goals of NGOs may vary. Fixed indicators, such as the number of people reached and the longevity of the organization, as proposed by David Brown and Darcy Ashman, are not the aim of all NGOs (Brown and Ashman, 1996). Some may prefer a selective reach. Others may be short-lived because they are addressing a short-lived problem and aim to disband when they have accomplished or received some satisfaction in meeting their goals. This study makes the definition of NGO effectiveness endogenous. That is, what is regarded as effective community development and how successful community development projects are implemented is determined by the community development organization and thus subject to empirical investigation.
2. The term *madrassa* [religious school] is used to refer to different kinds of schools in Indonesia and Pakistan. In Indonesia, a government school is referred to as a *madrassa* whereas in Pakistan *madaris* are privately run Islamic schools that provide an Islamic education and are not recognized by the government. *Madaris* in Pakistan have received renewed attention recently because many of them have served as training grounds for *mujahadeen* [freedom fighters] in Afghanistan and Kashmir. According to a 1988 government survey, 65% of Pakistan's *madaris* were Deobandi, 25% Bareilvi, and 6% were Ahl-e-Hadith.

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