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Reaching The Bottom of The Pyramid

Topic for Paper submission: How do spiritual influences and/or practices manifest themselves in venture operations?

Subject:

Can volunteerism be the unexpressed demonstration of a powerful spiritual practice manifested in an effective social and economical activity?

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Full Paper

Topic for Paper submission: How do spiritual influences and/or practices manifest themselves in venture operations?

Can volunteerism be the unexpressed demonstration of a powerful spiritual practice manifested in an effective social and economical activity?

Abstract: This article is a presentation of the phenomenon of volunteerism. It will give the keys of a better understanding of the activity, and especially how it can be considered as a powerful spiritual practice which is used in venture operations. Step by step in this article, volunteerism will be shown in its all forms and all different way of application. Its range, scale and extent in the world will be presented. The interest of taking a serious consideration of it will be explained while listing the positive effects volunteerism can have on the individual, as physical as mental. The spiritual heritage of volunteerism will be also examined and put in perspective with the present situation of the International project of Auroville.

Introduction

Numerous studies are presented here and confirm that when people engage in volunteerism, the result is increased absorption, retention, attraction, morale, and other such positive benefits.

The concept of volunteerism is exemplified in the city of Auroville and is a principal driving force in the running of the city; indeed Aurovilians are considered as volunteers and stewards of the township, and its inhabitants have dedicated their lives to this project since 1968. In this article we will present recent studies which show that even among visitors to the city, a considerable number of them dedicate their time to volunteer, for short or long periods, to contribute to the development of the township project.

Where does volunteerism come originally from? Which values does it carry? What is its spiritual contribution? What are the benefits for the city, the entrepreneurs and the individuals? Does the world perceive the contribution of volunteerism at its real value? How has this alternative way of working shaped the development of an international city that is growing both economically and spiritually? How has volunteerism contributed to the growth of projects in Auroville which have achieved international dimensions? How can this concept be implemented in classical organizations in a way to benefit all, employers and employees?

The purpose of this article is to present an actual picture of volunteerism and to answer to all these questions in order to understand better this phenomenon.

This article can address the entrepreneurs willing to innovate by reconsidering the labor force. Professor Israel Kirzner (1973) describes the entrepreneur as a man who perceives and pursues economic opportunities in the face of uncertainty and for whom alertness is the fundamental quality. Through his alertness, the entrepreneur is able to foresee economic developments that other actors have overlooked.[1] In this paper, it will be argued that Volunteerism can be conceptualized as an economic opportunity for development. A closer look on the phenomenon of volunteerism and its contribution to both self development and economical growth is indispensably called for.

There is no agreed methodology for measuring the extent of voluntary engagement and this makes the task difficult. However, the studies we present here and which are only a part of numerous studies, attest to the universality of volunteerism, its universal spread, massive scale and impact.

A more in-depth study of volunteerism is crucial for several reasons: to better understand human-resources management, how organizations can consider the interests of both employers and employees, and the impact of inspiration and spirituality as a driving force for self and economic development.

These themes are encapsulated by the term 'volunteerism' which can be defined as a form of work that finds its specificity in the fact that the people employed do not receive any financial remuneration in exchange for their work. This aspect is particularly important when considering a spiritual approach to economic activity. According to Helen Clark (2011), Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "the terms which define volunteerism and the forms of its expression may vary in different languages and cultures, but the values which drive it are common and universal: a desire to contribute to the common good, out of free will and in a spirit of solidarity, without expectation of material reward."[2]

Volunteerism indeed represents a platform of interaction where financial profit does not take place, but where business can still be successful.

To the question "How do spiritual influences and/or practices manifest themselves in venture operations?" a spiritual enquiry is here facilitated by the concept of gratification, mostly intangible, that volunteers gain in exchange of work. More specifically, this could be the experience of being a 'worker' in resonance with the 'work' being done. In addition, the first United Nations *State of the World's Volunteerism Report* (2011, p7) emphasizes how volunteerism is a means by which people can take control of their lives and make a difference to themselves and to those around them.

These ideas give rise to the essential question: Can volunteerism be the unexpressed demonstration of a powerful spiritual practice manifested in an effective social and economical activity?

The study of this question justifies then the adoption of the following plan:

On the first hand, we will show how present is volunteerism in the world, in various fields of work in order to express the powerful capacities of this activity.

On the second hand, we will focus on the impact and mutual benefits brought about volunteerism, first on the individuals, on the companies and then on the society with numerous examples of achievements in various countries. We will show then why I can be effectively used for a socio-economical activity.

We will finish the article with a study of one of the origins of volunteerism through the traditional Gurukul system of India in order to show its spiritual potential. And thus its application and manifestation in the International Township Project of Auroville will make the link between the spiritual concept and an effective socio-economical activity.

For a recognition of the importance of volunteerism in the world

The measurement system to evaluate volunteerism value suffers from a lack of consensus on economic data: voluntary organizations are developing tools and instruments to monitor the economic value of their volunteers' contributions. However, national statistical offices vary greatly in terms of data collected and their interest in measuring economic value of volunteering. Difficulties are arising from the inconsistency in approaches to quantifying volunteer numbers, time dedicated and activities undertaken. Where calculations have been made, there is usually no consensus on estimated economic value due to differing ways of valuing volunteer work. This article does not use figures on monetary value provided by Member States. Instead, it uses gross estimates of the economic value of volunteering based on the common replacement cost method for all countries. The term "replacement cost" or "replacement value" refers to the amount that would have to be paid if the work performed by a volunteer had to perform by a paid staff member.

Recent country-level studies, largely in developed countries, of the size and composition of volunteering have proven a solid basis for discussions of many aspects of volunteerism. For example, the 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, conducted by Statistics Canada, recorded a total of 2.1 billion volunteer hours with both an increase in the number of volunteers (5.7%) and volunteer hours (4.2%) from 2004.[3] In 2004, in the United States, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor indicated that 62.8 million people had volunteered for an organization at least once in the previous 12 months. The bureau of Statistics of Australia found that, in 2007, 5.2 million people volunteered for as sum of 713 million hours of work, the equivalent to 14.6 billion Australian dollars of paid work time. The study showed that 34% of the adult population volunteered (36% of women and 32% of men).

To empower a community to recognize its own contributions, an action research study in Jansenville, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, based on community calendars mapped the amount of volunteer time, skills, goods in-kind, money that community-based, non-governmental and faith-based organizations received from members in the community. The results translated in a total of 19 years and 8 months of unpaid labor a year. In a community where the local government estimates that 60% of families live in poverty, the total contribution of volunteering was estimated to have a value of 53,000 US dollars generated by 4343 people across 378 households. This valuing of community assets has been eye opening, motivating and inspiring to participants, encouraging them to build on their "investment".[4]

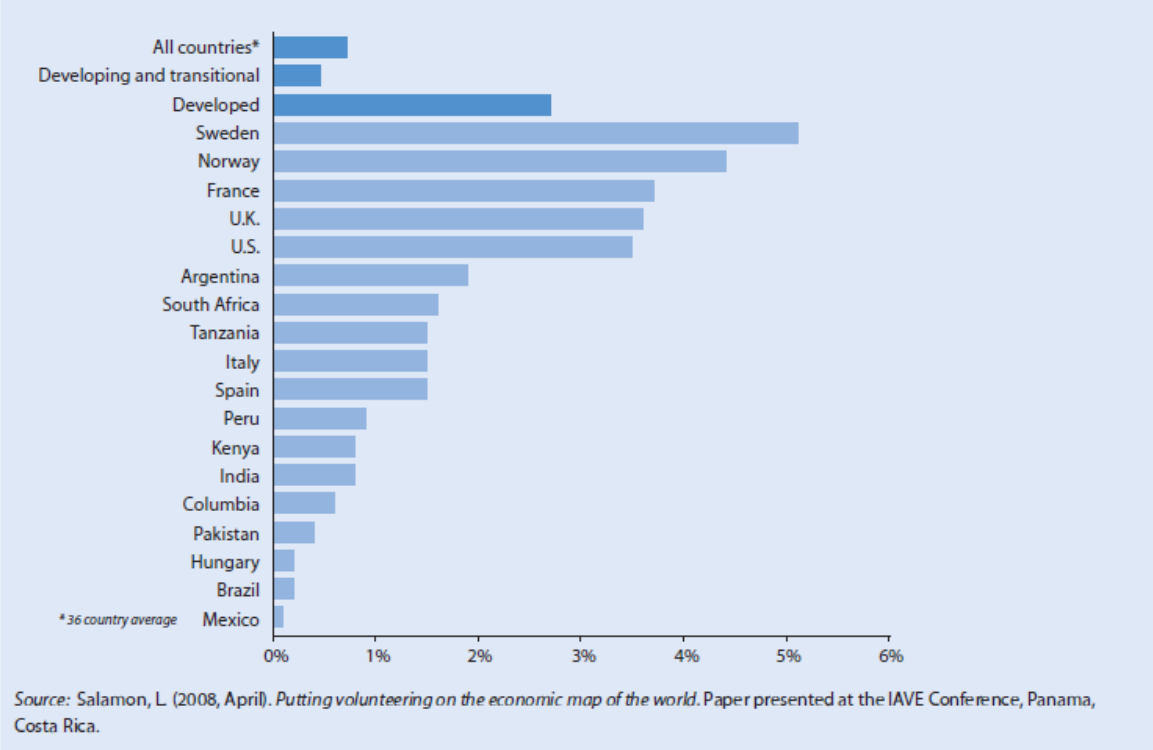
The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CNP)[5] provides a common survey form to participating countries with suggested questions and examples of the kinds of activity about which respondents would be asked. "*Think about the past months. During that time period, did you help, work, or provide any service or assistance to anyone outside your family or household without receiving compensation?"* Respondents who answered "no" were then prompted to think broadly about such activities even if they thought it "natural that everyone would do such a thing in a similar situation." While this also applies to formal types of volunteerism, it is especially relevant for the informal types often so embedded in cultures and traditions that they may not even be considered volunteering. This makes the task of measuring more challenging.

1.	China	*1,306 million*
2.	India	*1,094 million*
3.	United States	*296 million*
4.	Indonesia	*229 million*
5.	Brazil	*186 million*
6.	Pakistan	*158 million*
7.	Bangladesh	*144 million*
8.	Russia	*143 million*
9.	**"Volunteer Land"**	***ca. 140 million***
10.	Nigeria	*129 million*
11.	Japan	*128 million*

Source: Volunteering – Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project; Population: United States Census Bureau

The CNP estimates that, between 1995 and 2000, the number of volunteers contributing through voluntary organizations in 36 countries, taken together, would make the ninth largest country in the world in terms of population with about 140 million volunteers.

In the same 36 countries, volunteers comprised 44% of the work force of civil society organizations representing the equivalent of 20.8 million full-time workers. Using a "replacement cost" approach, CNP calculated the economic contribution of volunteers in the 36 countries to be 400 billion US dollars annually. This represented, on average, 1.1% of GDP in these countries. However, in developing and transition countries, volunteer work represented a somewhat smaller 0.7% of GDP. In developed countries, volunteer work represented 2.7% of GDP.[6]



These figures, among many others, have been contributing to the recognition of the value of volunteerism from the International Community. In fact, the United Nations proclaimed 2001 the International Year of Volunteers (IYV), and the European Union designated 2011 as the "European Year of Volunteering". The international community recognized then the essential contributions which volunteers make to the progress, cohesion, and resilience of communities and nations. Yet, the phenomenon is still misconstrued and undervalued; the contributions of volunteers are not always factored into development strategies and often remain at the margins of development debate. All too often, the strong links are overlooked between volunteer activity on the one hand and peace and human development on the other (UNV, 2011).[7] Isn't it time for the contribution of volunteerism to the quality of life, and the well-being in a wider sense, to be understood as one of the missing components of a development paradigm that still has economic growth at its core? "People are the real wealth of a nation"; with these words the first *Human Development Report* (HDR) began in 1990 a forceful case for a new approach to thinking about development. Development is about expanding the choices available to people so that they may lead lives that they value. Economic growth is only one means of increasing people's choices (HDR, 2011).[8] The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2002 attended to extend the notion of volunteerism as an additional valuable component of national development planning to development cooperation policy. The Resolution of the General Assembly contained what follows: "Recognizing and building strategically on rich, local traditions of voluntary self-help and mutual aid can open the way to building up a new constituency in support of development efforts. Forging a link in the mind of the general public in countries providing development assistance between domestic volunteering in those countries and volunteering in countries receiving assistance can also help enlist public support for development cooperation" (A/RES/56/38, p.2).

Since the International Year of Volunteerism considerable progress has been achieved, especially in the developing world, in responding to the four major themes identified for the year, namely greater recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism. Governments have developed an extensive list of recommendations for actions to support volunteerism. These are contained in the UNGA Resolution 56/38 adopted in 2001. Among the key consideration was "Neglecting to factor volunteering into design and implementation

of policies could entail the risk of overlooking a valuable asset and undermine traditions of cooperation that bind communities together"[9]

These recommendations have been supplemented by subsequent resolutions from the United Nations General Assembly[10], and also emphasized in successive reports of the United Nations Secretary-General.[11]

In 2011, a decade after the IYV, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) wrote a report. It coincides with an intense debate about the type of societies that we wish to see, for ourselves and for the future generations. In 2003, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Evaluation Office (EO) stated in their report that globalization is rapidly transforming cultural and social norms, bringing benefits to some but exclusion and marginalization to others. Many people feel a loss of control over their lives.[12]

Marian Harkin, Member of the European Parliament, said in 2011 "People often feel powerless in the face of globalization; like flotsam and jetsam on the waves with no stable anchors. Volunteerism can be an anchor for people as they affect change in their own community of place".[13]

About measuring the value of volunteerism, the international community has recognized the need for governments to "establish the economic value of volunteering to help to highlight one important aspect of its overall contribution to society and thereby assist in the development of informed policies" (UNGA, 2010, p5).[14]

This chapter confirms that volunteer action is found the world over and is huge. Taking the measure of volunteerism, in all its diversity and rich expressions, is occurring in many places and in many different ways. However, it is still at a very early stage and presents considerable challenges. The range of studies mentioned here points to the diversity of issues covered as well as the absence of common approaches. Due to the highly variable definitions, methodologies and purposes among national, regional and global initiatives, it is not yet possible to provide a composite picture of the dimensions of volunteerism by country, region or any other categorization. However, the purpose here is not, in any way, to curtail current and new initiatives aimed at measuring volunteerism. These meet specific needs. They help to add to the knowledge base on volunteerism. As such, they should be encouraged and supported, especially in the developing world.

So to the question "Can volunteerism be a powerful practice (or means) for venture operations?" the answer can be "Yes". Indeed, as the International Community recognized the importance of this kind of activity, all the governments are now encouraged to take this practice in consideration in their development plans. But this doesn't explain the reason we decided to choose volunteerism as a great spiritual practice manifested in venture actions. The next chapter will then be dedicated to the effects and impact of volunteerism on economical actors which include individuals, but also companies, organizations and the society. We will demonstrate the potential of volunteerism to affect in a better way the actors involved in a venture operation.

Volunteerism – a great impact for the development mutually of individuals, economical actors and the society

Beyond economic data, there is ever more research into the nature and motivations of volunteers. These include studies that look at student volunteering in 12 countries;[15] senior well-being in Europe;[16] people in Israel on welfare benefits who volunteer;[17] the role of religious organizations in promoting volunteerism in Latin America;[18] and volunteerism policies and legislation globally.[19]

In this chapter, we attempt to take the measure of volunteerism, looking also beyond the numbers. Calculating the dimensions and value of volunteerism, including economic value, is obviously important. Yet numbers are not the whole story. Some argue that putting a figure

on volunteering detracts from its intrinsic values in terms of its impact on communities and causes on the volunteers themselves. Others would say that the main contribution of volunteerism, its true value, lies in creating harmonious societies marked by high levels of social cohesion and well-being, also factors which are very hard to quantify.

"Putting people at the centre of development is much more than an intellectual exercise", notes the HDR 2010 (p. 2). "It means making progress equitable and broad-based, enabling people to be active participants in change".[20] Volunteerism can be a highly effective and practical means of building on people's capabilities in all societies and at all levels. It also provides a channel through which these capabilities may enhance the well-being of individuals, communities and nations.

"By volunteering people realize their assets which include knowledge, skills, and social networks, for the benefit of themselves, their families and their communities. The values of volunteerism are extremely relevant in strengthening the capacity of the most vulnerable to achieve secure livelihoods and to enhance their physical, economic, spiritual and social well-being. Moreover, volunteering can reduce the social exclusion that is often the result of poverty, marginalization, and other forms of inequality. Volunteerism is one path to inclusion among population groups that are often excluded such as women, young and older people, people with disabilities, migrants and people living with HIV/AIDS." (UNV 2011, p9)[21]

In 2006 at the Fifth African development Forum, organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, a study entitled "Youth Volunteering for Development: Africa 21st Century"[22] was presented. The research, covering nine countries, showed how young people's capacities develop when they volunteer. They become active developments agents in their communities. Moreover, it emphasized how volunteer programmes can be linked to policy frameworks on a sustainable basis. The outcome statement declared: "It is essential, therefore, that African governments, working with their developments partners, foster the spirit of volunteerism among young people" (UNDESA, 2007, p. 110).[23]

In 2010 and 2011, both African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) launched regional youth volunteer corps to contribute to peace and development in their regions.

The 2010 National Survey of Volunteering conducted by peak-body Volunteering Australia, found that 83% of volunteers say that volunteerism has increased their sense of belonging to their community. The survey highlights the important role that volunteering plays in providing opportunities for people to learn with 26% saying the training received as part of their volunteer work has helped them to acquire an accreditation/qualification. The survey also found that volunteerism plays an important role in social inclusion in Australian society. The survey found that volunteering can help reduce feelings of personal isolation, offer people skills and social contacts, support a greater sense of self-worth and challenge stereotypes about different groups.[24]

On a more business oriented vision, numerous studies and research have been made in United States and United Kingdom looking at the impact of volunteerism on employees and their employers.

AAA of Northern California has found a positive correlation between employee promotion and those who volunteer. The company attributes this relationship to increased visibility of employee skills to management. By offering their expertise, volunteers are able to refine and enhance their job skills while increasing networking opportunities; this is particularly important for recent college graduates.[25]

The top business benefits associated with supporting volunteer activities included[26]:

- providing personal development opportunities for employees (76%)
- helping to motivate staff (72%)
- bringing new skills/experience/ideas into the organization (69%)

- enhancing corporate reputation (69%) or increasing respect for the organization (60%)

A survey carried out by Time Bank through Reed Executive showed that among 200 of the UK's leading businesses:

- 73% of employers would recruit a candidate with volunteering experience over one without.
- 94% of employers believe that volunteering can add to existing skills.
- 94% of employees who volunteered to learn new skills had benefited either by getting their first job, improving their salary, or being promoted.

Businesses that promote Family Volunteering also report significant results[27]:

- 70% report improved public and community relations.
- 57% report greater employee commitment.
- 15% report more productive employees.
- 12% report fewer hours lost for family responsibilities.

The author Claire McCartney (Senior Researcher at Roffey Park Management College) said: "Volunteering is becoming increasingly important for employers - and not just for their corporate responsibility. It is clear that well managed policies to support staff wishing to take part in volunteer activities can deliver significant business benefits in areas such as staff development and retention."

The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development 2005 Flexible Working survey of 585 UK organizations found that staff retention was the main reason for organizations introducing flexible working practices. In the same survey, 70% of HR professionals said that flexible working had a positive effect on employee motivation: "Volunteering led to a successful business."

Beyond business profitability the Corporation for National and Community Service, with a series of studies and researches has shown the benefits of volunteerism on individuals[28]:

- A strong relationship between volunteering and health: those who volunteer have lower mortality rates, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression later in life than those who do not volunteer.
- Volunteering also leads to improved physical and mental health.
- Recent studies on the relationship between health and volunteering demonstrate that the benefits of volunteering are not limited to the recipients of the volunteer services.

A study found that in general, volunteers report greater life satisfaction and better physical health than non-volunteers, and their life satisfaction and physical health improves at a greater rate as a result of volunteering[29].

In conclusion, entrepreneurs should consider volunteerism as an important alternative human resource. Of course cost-related factors are the main motivation to increasing volunteerism in small businesses. The three volunteer-costs that must be addressed then are employee compensation, organizing the volunteer effort with a focus made on their motivation, and worker longevity loss.

A central thesis running through this article is that the values inherent in volunteerism endow it with far-reaching potential for human development. This motion of development includes factors such as solidarity, social inclusion, empowerment, life-satisfaction and individual and societal well-being. The well-being of individuals is intrinsically linked to their contributions to the lives of others.

With this chapter we begin to touch the very point of volunteerism. We found here an activity world wide spread and with records of its benefits for everyone which has been involved directly or indirectly. And the benefits can be much beyond the simple production of goods or services, the individuals are affected, and then their collectivity represented by their company

or community, and then it can be the whole society which can benefit from the influence of volunteerism.

Now the last question remains unanswered, “can volunteerism be considered as a spiritual practice, and if so how can it be manifested in a venture operation?” In fact it is for this reason that the Auroville project shows a very interesting living experience by using mainly volunteer force. Based on a ancient Indian tradition of Ashram, and made to be an example, the demonstration of an advanced society supporting the progress of humanity, can Auroville represent the bridge between the past and the future, the tradition and the need of modernity, the immaterial spirit brought into a material word?

The traditional system of Gurukul as found working in the International Township Project of Auroville:

The country of India is of particular importance in regard to its fabulous spiritual traditions. The Gurukul System is an ancient Indian philosophy of education. The notion of a “guru” in Indian culture makes an important reference of how knowledge and guidance for self spiritual development is transmitted/exchanged through the dedication, commitment and energy that the student/devotee brings by volunteering in the household and participating in chores as part of the Guru (teacher) who can be thought of as a guide, father and role-model. In this way volunteerism has become a prevalent notion among Indian people.

Life in a Gurukul meant keeping to strict discipline. Students lived in very simple surroundings, practiced celibacy and cultivated virtue and discipline under the custody of their guru’s confidence and attention. Amongst themselves, students lived together as equals, regardless of their social status, and acquired the same knowledge from their guru. They had to render services like cooking food and cleaning shared environs. At the end of the training, students come out as responsible individuals. This type of training was designed to increase personal responsibility.[30]

In this system of education the gurus or teachers did not charge any fees and so in exchange for the teachings, the students were voluntarily serving their guru. In this way, the learning and living space was well maintained benefitting the community, while the students/volunteers received satisfaction from the teachings of the teacher/guru.

The high interest in this system is thus the relation between the process of learning and the work. In this way spiritual practices can manifest in venture operations. In fact it is for a spiritual teaching that the student work and this work is also done applying the teaching for an activity responding to the need of a community.

In some extent, regarding the basic conditions of being allowed to live in these communities, it can be compared to volunteerism. In fact, the student were not getting any material reward in exchange of their work, they were only receiving a spiritual teaching. That was the reason of their work. And actually even this teaching was based on self-giving, renouncing to the ego, surrender to life. It was taught that it is by serving unconditionally a community and never expecting anything in return that one can feel the beauty of life and its simplicity.

This Gurukul system was tradition in India but during the colonial era it began to be replaced by the system established by the colonizers and became almost extinct, save in some remote areas.

Nowadays in India, there exist throughout the land numerous spiritual centers known as Ashrams. Here, people live together, dedicated to the teachings and philosophy of a Guru or spiritual master. Thus in this centers, it is not hard to find someone while receiving spiritual upliftment and teachings ‘offering service’ or ‘seva’ at any point in time, or in other words, volunteering by contribute towards the maintenance and organization of the center.

In the case of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram (SAA) in Pondicherry, thousands of volunteers arrive every year from all over the world to offer their services to the Ashram maintenance, teaching, farming, music arts & crafts. It is noteworthy that the SAA is one of the richest

ashrams in India, demonstrating well the impressive contribution of volunteer service framed within a strong cultural tradition based on self spiritual development.[31]

Here again the volunteer system is strongly integrated in the daily life of the Ashram, and because their motivation and interest in the teaching is so strong that their dedication is unconditional. This is one of the main reason of the success of this Ashram.

The SAA is all the more interesting because its Founders also founded, in 1968, the Universal Township of Auroville 16 kilometers away from the Ashram, intended as a site for the manifestation of an actual human unity in diversity.

People from all countries of the world including India have in the past forty five years of its existence come to Auroville to volunteer and contribute to its growth while endeavoring to live a life dedicated to the ideals of Auroville: human unity and international understanding.

Having spent a large number of the formative years planting trees and eking out a living in an arid and barren land, Aurovilians have today created a fertile forest in what was once desert and are now growing a sustainable community of their own. The lifestyle here reflects a universal culture of healthy living, beautiful handicraft, world music and dance, various healing practices, educational research and alternative & ecological ways of living, forestation, organic agriculture, village development, earth construction, alternative technologies, renewable energies, water treatment etc…

In this context though, the highly interesting facts on Auroville are the percentages regarding people who come here as volunteers.

With a population of only 2000 adults, Auroville welcomes every year about 8 000 foreign visitors, among whom 28% arrive as volunteers[32]. It is clear then that volunteerism is of importance in the development of the International Township Project.

Volunteers to Auroville mostly come from Europe and North America, and are not necessarily only young people in need of adventure but also mature people leaving their daily lives and occupations to come to serve in Auroville. Actually every category of age is represented here.

It is thus common in Auroville to be volunteering in a project in any one of its various fields of activity/research.

The results of a survey of a large sample of entrepreneurs show that an important part of the units in Auroville owes their success to the input of volunteers. This resource permits them to start concretizing and improving innovative ideas, and to launch high quality projects. In this context what often happens is the combination of temporarily skilled workers (volunteers) and the permanent local people help to create a sustainable way of running projects. The economical aspect of volunteerism can then contribute to the growth of the business as well as the development of human unity.

Units in Auroville work autonomously regarding their organization and the volunteers they engage. There are more than a thousand units working in dives fields which can be agriculture as well as education or construction. Almost every unit needs volunteers because the population of the city (2000 adults) is not enough to supply the human resources needs of all the units and their budget cannot permit them to engage local people as employees. Sometime it can also be a problem of skills which can only be found in westerners' profiles. Due to this freedom of organization, every unit is independently working at recruiting volunteers and running its business to make it successful. In Auroville the success doesn't come from making or growing profits, but from making work an experiment which was based on either sustainable development, or social improvement, or ecological technique creation, or new education approach, or research evolution…

Conclusion:

Communities are suffering due to the growth of secular societies but at the same time it may be possible to bridge that expanding gap through volunteering.

Volunteering is ultimately about helping others and having an impact on people's well-being. "What better way is there to connect with your community and give a little back? As a volunteer, you certainly return to society some of the benefits that society gives you." is the common speech among Aurovilians.

All these different surveys, studies and research show clearly that the activity of volunteerism is already well-known in the world, but maybe not yet recognized seriously by governments in their development plans. For this the International community, through the United Nations and the European Union, are of good influence to press in this direction for the following years. We saw that most of the time this experience of volunteering is benefiting as well the individuals directly involved but also the receivers of this help and work done by them, then the organization using then cost free workers, and finally the company who decided to encourage their employees to volunteer. After all if all these different actors of the economy are positively affected by the concept of volunteerism, why the society wouldn't?

And to relate to the topic launched by the ISOL Journal, can volunteerism be a spiritual practice manifested in a venture operation? We demonstrated that for some extents volunteerism can find its root in the Indian tradition of Gurukul which is known to be a much respected way of spiritual teaching. Volunteerism presents the basics of a spiritual work done individually through voluntarily work without conditions and expectations, no material reward but the pleasure of working for a good cause, a purpose going much beyond our own individuality. The question now is to know if every organization running volunteers activity does have such results, if a special organization of work is needed to permit to the individual to realize that, if there is a need of a guru to achieve this, if the spiritual dimension can be ephasized…

Besides that, on a more practical way, this inquiry on volunteerism addresses the entrepreneurs and even the Governments interested in reducing health problems and expenses, unemployment and civic spirit of the citizens for a more ecological and social approach of life.

[1] Israel Kirzner, *Perception, Opportunity and Profit: Studies in the Theory of Entrepreneurship*, (Chicago, 1973)
[2] United Nations Volunteers, *State of the World's Volunteerism Report 2011,* Foreword, page 4
[3] Hall, Lasby, Ayer & Gibbons, 2009; Statistics Canada, 2008
[4] Wilkinson, Maposa (2009)
[5] The CNP project aimed to document the civil society sector through national studies, to explain differences among countries and to evaluate the impact of civil society organizations on the wider society. The project employs a comparative empirical approach that features a common framework, set of definitions and information-gathering strategies and a network of national and international advisory committees to oversee progress and help to disseminate results. The study was launched in 1992 in an initial set of 12 countries and has since expanded to 45 countries representing a wide range of social, economic and religious contexts. The CNP collects data on organization-based volunteering through specially commissioned standardized surveys administered by Local Associates, professional survey firms or government agencies. The surveys are typically population based using representative random samples of 1000 to 2000 people, although organization-based surveys were used in some places, often relying on sampling methods focused on representative regions, where suitable sampling frames were unavailable Variables covered included the number of volunteers, the hours volunteered and the distribution of these hours among activity fields defined by the International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO). This allowed the translation of volunteering into the equivalent number of full-time workers which was then related to the economically active population of the country to control for the variations in the size of different countries.
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