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## Summary

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It is a difficult thing to summarise a conference in which so many people felt they didn't have any answers!

It seems to be that I should really start with what Sumet Jumsai said. I think he gave an overview which is terribly important. Going back 30,000 years in time was an extraordinarily useful way of getting to know about oneself, because you saw deep currents of history, many, many things which told us how much we all have in common. You know, this question of identity can be a divisive thing, a political thing. It has so many other implications. What we heard this morning was like a healing process. You felt, very, very clearly that this was all one people, one family. So the first thing, I think we learned in this search for identity is that if it takes place with the right overview, (which was illustrated so brilliantly), it is really a marvellous integrative process, not a divisive one.

The second thing I think, is that the identity we are searching for is going to be pluralistic. It is not a single mono-centric one. I think the reasons for this were well covered by our twins, Robi and Romi, (or should I say our Siamese Twins?). It was very interesting that Robi Sularto Sastrowardoyo was talking about a very special mono-culture, Bali, which is very beautiful, static and completely in balance. And therefore extremely fragile! Any intervention breaks the whole thing. As opposed to that, Romi Khosla gave an incisive description of India, with all its vertical and horizontal planes, and showed a highly pluralistic society which looks (even to many people who live there), like tremendous chaos and disorder. But when you examine it, India is actually many layers of order, even a bazaar scene has several such layers, (all those cows, and cycles, and camels, all following different patterns), and yet this seems really to have a kind of stability.

This pluralism is not just found in India, it is the strength of much of Asia. But if you define yourself in narrow, mono-cultural terms, you are going to be

fragile and you are going to break, as surely and as sadly as Bali is going to break, or is in the process of breaking.

So to repeat: the first thing we learnt is that overviews are very, very important in looking for identity. We cannot start with a parochial mind, for then we are just going to learn how to hate and kill each other. It is the overview which gives real depth to the exercise and makes it worthwhile.

Secondly, identity is pluralistic. It is not a single pattern. It cannot be, even in what looks to outsiders like a monolith culture or a monolith nation, there is diversity.

The third thing is, identity is dynamic. I think a number of people said, it is a process, which is continuously changing. I think of Fawizah Kamal, and her photographs and slides which she showed so quickly. I think of Lim Chong Keat, who used the word "integrity" and, to me I understood that to mean process (i.e. a situation which is in balance etc.). In fact, how often Buckminster Fuller's ideas and thoughts have come up! Lim Chong Keat, I must thank you for the silent tribute you paid him. As architects, we all owe him a profound debt, whether we knew him personally or not, and it lets me forgive you for some of the other slides you showed.

Once we realise that identity is pluralistic and dynamic, does it mean then that anything goes? That anyone can come in and build anything anywhere, anytime? No, I think often we might not know what something is, but we surely know what it is not. I think someone said that to reach truth, one must shed light. That is a marvellous thought. I think we know what we can begin to throw out. In that way, we will find that thing which we are looking for, that truth. Things that we don't throw away are the timeless elements, the deep structure determinants of our built-form. The climate, and the sea, as Sumet Jumsai pointed out this morning, are aspect of our environment which not only affect us directly, but which affect culture, and therefore ritual and therefore built-form. Now, if

we cannot tell the difference between some thing as authentic as those images Sumet Jumsai showed, to something which is just superficially picked up, then we are in trouble, for if being an architect means anything, I would think it is to have the right instincts

How is this identity — or these identities — expressed in architecture? For as designers, we deal in objects. We are producing hardware, i.e. the built environment. And it seems from our discussions that there are three streams which create this built-form. The first is what is being constructed in the rural areas — and Asia is still predominantly rural. When Fawizah Kamal showed those slides, she commented herself that what we see is a dynamic process of continuous change. Now do those images, that indigenous architecture, move to the city, or as Hasan-Uddin Khan questioned, does it go the other way? In the slides of Mona Serageldin, we saw that today the mythical images are coming out of the urban areas, from the top down. This is what is happening in Egypt, and I think it is certainly happening in India as well. If you are asked to design housing for villagers, and you say, “I will give you a beautiful mud house”, they feel insulted. They would like to have a cement floor, and electric lights etc, they think you are patronising them.

So if the first stream is indigenous, the second stream is what you might call the new popular. I think we have to be very, very careful here before we dismiss — or condemn — this stream. We are searching for identity and yet for the last two days, we haven't thought about whether the search involved all those masses of people, and how and in what way they relate to our own questioning. That is very sad. Your Minister said. what are the aspirations of those people? It is one of the tragedies of architecture, of architects, all of us in Asia, that we have not connected our work more to the vast majority of these people. And that phrase which I quoted on that first day: “I am coming from where you are going” is really true. Those people are coming from where we're going. In fact, sorry Lim Chong Keat but you know those ‘T’ shirts you print, you should make one: “I am coming from where you are going” on one side, and on the other side could be the opposite “You are going to wherever it is I'm coming from” Because to me it sums up much what is happening on our spaceship Earth today.

So we have the indigenous, we have the new popular thing and then we have the architect. The intervention. We cannot miss the crucial importance of these interventions. They help generate the prototypes that filter down in the process we discussed. We are purveyors of myths, and of ideologies. As someone mentioned just now, very often of the wrong

myths, the wrong ideologies. In order to change this, there are two ways we can proceed. One is to go back to the indigenous. The other of course, is to try and invent the future. New attitudes and life styles. Now you must not deride this approach. It is out of fashion right now but it is very, very powerful. Those post-modernists in America, they shouldn't be looking at Palladio, they should be looking at Frank Lloyd Wright. He is their past. He invented that past. Before he came along, no one had really tried to design house for the average American family, what Wright called the Usonian house. He didn't look up any references. He just felt, well, this was the way it could be done. And as you know, much of American suburbia, almost all of it, is a kind of hand-me-down version of a Wright house. What they call the ranch house, the split-level house, etc., are all expressing basic mythical relationships of space first created by Frank Lloyd Wright. So it can be done. I am not saying everyone can do it but let us say that it addressed one of the crucial issues in the developing world. And that is the nature of change; the necessity for change, to look forward, not just backward.

Do you remember that book of Schumacher's “Small is Beautiful”? Well, he has got this chapter on Buddhist economics. He says that one of the problems of the Third World is that we are trapped in concepts like GNP, per capita income, etc. We know that they need have nothing to do with happiness. But we don't know any other indicators of how to judge our progress. And so you get someone working on a factory assembly-line, tightening bolts or something moronic. He is very unhappy but he is earning well, and therefore feels he should be happy. Schumacher says this occurs because we define work as producing an object or a service useful to society; a definition which I think we would all accept? Well, once you accept that, the rest follows automatically. That is to say, if you produce it faster, or if you use less materials you are better off which brings in all the old indicators efficiency, GNP, per capita income, everything.

In contrast, Schumacher says that Gautama Buddha felt one should work for three reasons. One is that a life without work is a life in imbalance, i.e. like a life without play, or without love. Work is important to balance your lives. The second reason he said you should work, is because in working you grow, you define yourself. The third reason you work is to produce an object or service useful to society. It is wonderful because it explains why the poor mechanic standing in an assembly line is so desperately unhappy. For if you follow the Buddhist analysis, then obviously he is not achieving the first objective, i.e. he is not putting his life into proper balance. Nor is he defining himself in anyway. On the contrary, he is doing something moronic. So in

economic terms — Buddhist economics, anyway — our worker is being grossly inefficient.

I think that's a wonderful analysis, food for thought for all of us. We define ourselves — and grow — by the tasks we address. If you are a doctor, for instance, you are constantly faced with the issues of life and death. This is why a GP is such a fine human being. He has to ask himself questions that are fundamental to existence — all these things of whether the child should live, or the mother, and so forth. But yet it seems to me, these are really the questions of the last century. It has just about been decided that human life is sacred and we shouldn't really take it, and so forth. What is so marvellous about architecture and planning, and about some of the issues we have been discussing, is that they are the issues of this century. For instance what is your moral right to design a township for 500,000 people? Or to work with the kind of people Mona Serageldin was telling us about, and conning them into doing it your way? These are the central issues of the 20th century. This is what Facism is about, deciding for other people. Yet also, what is your responsibility if you don't do it? If you just walk away from it all saying: I have no right to decide? Couldn't that also be a crime? And I think this is what torments us as architects. We know that these are not problems of our making, we didn't cause these people to become poor, for God's sake! there is really nothing you can do, there is no lever of power that you can pull, to change it. And yet it moves you. Doesn't just move you, it torments you. Doubly so, in the Third World. But perhaps that is the advantage of being in this part of the planet. For it is the nature of the questions we address which allow us to grow. Even if you can't find the answers, you have had a chance to grow which you don't have living in Switzerland, or New York or some such place (Maybe you do in New York now, because they are getting involved in their problems.) I think it was Stendhal, writing about Napoleon, who said "There are no great men, there are only great events". But I think it is not just great events, it is great issues. That is what the Bauhaus was really about — heroic issues. And there are heroic issues here in Asia — right here and now.

So if I get back to try and summarise this thing, it would seem to me, that what we did agree on in general, is that identity is a process, it is like that snail's trail, the outcome of tackling a series of issues which you perceive as real. It is not an end in itself; it is a by-product. Secondly, it is pluralistic — which doesn't mean you have to accept it all. Pluralism just means that you don't think there is a single answer, that identity has many, many manifestations, and I think that is the strength really of Asian societies — of their tremendous resilience and stability. The third thing of course is that the patterns, we are talking

about are dynamic. There is continuous change (and looking at change over 30,000 years was like a speeded-up cartoon, it went so fast). But even if you zoom down to 500 years or 50 years, you would see enormous changes in the patterns. And the one thing I would add, that I felt came out from Sumet Jumsai's talk this morning, is that this process, this searching for identity, can actually be a healing kind of process.