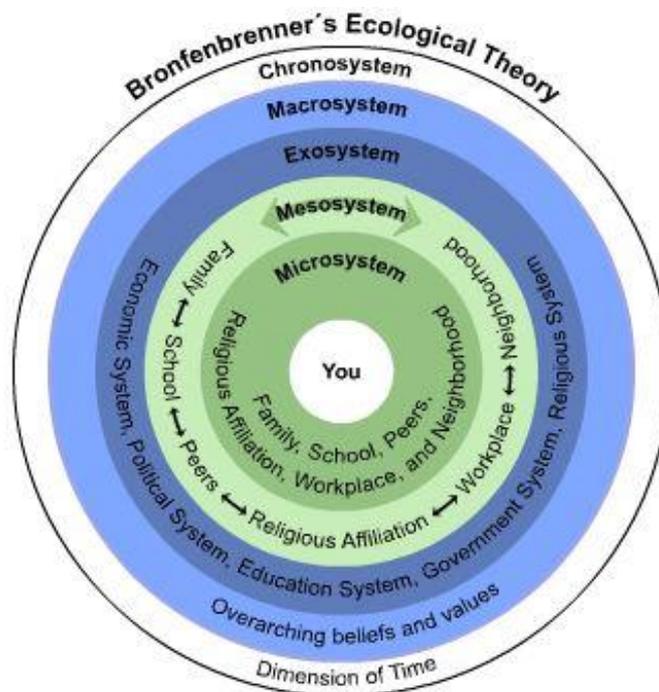


Ecological Model for Non-Violent Future¹

-Swami STEVANANDA²

I consider the Human Psyche as an Ecological Factor. After the First World War, sociologists associated with the Chicago School, as a reaction to the research conducted by developmental psychologists, developed socio-ecological models. These models were developed to further the understanding of the dynamic interrelations among various personal and environmental factors. These models bridge the gap between behavioral theories that focus on small settings and anthropological theories that analyze larger settings.

Urie Bronfenbrenner introduced a conceptual model in the 1970s and formalized it as a theory in the 1980s, and continually revised his model until his death in 2005. Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Framework for Human Development applies socio-ecological models to human development. Urie Bronfenbrenner argues that in order to understand human development, one must consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. This system is composed of five socially organized subsystems that help support and guide human growth. They range from the micro-systems, which refer to the relationship between a developing person and the immediate environment; such as the family, classroom, peer group, neighborhood, and the like. The macro-system refers to institutional patterns of culture, such as the economy, government, customs, cultural values and expectations and bodies of knowledge.



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²**The Rev. & Dr Ravikumar Stephen J** M S W, M B A, M Th (South Wales), M Phil (Peace Making), Ph D (Organizational Behavior), D C S (Church History), a Peace Activist, *Acharya* (www.ncsages.org) and Management Consultant (www.fablar.in).

Macro-system:

Among the FOUR sub-systems, mentioned in the model, the 'Macro sub-system' of socio-ecology is responsible for the formation of the "Micro sub-system" though the latter has greater influence on the development of an individual. It refers to the overall patterns of ideology and organization that characterize a given society or social group.

Macro-systems can be used to describe the cultural or social context of various societal groups such as social classes, ethnic groups, or religious affiliates. The macro-system influences what, how, when, and where we carry out our relationships. In a sense, the macro-system that surrounds us helps us to hold together the many threads of our lives. The macro-system is the outermost layer in the individual's environment, during his/her development. The effects of larger principles, such as XXX, (*straight edge lifestyle / popular culture*) defined by the macro-system have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other layers, more particularly the EXO-SYSTEM.

The Exo-system has an INDIRECT effect on the individual, because the influence from the Exosystem usually impacts the individual as it "trickles" down through other people in the one's life, more importantly during childhood. New laws, government reform, environmental regulation, social unrest, financial upheaval, business and nature of industry are a few examples of contexts that can dramatically affect a child's life and experiences even though the child may know nothing about them. Remember, even though the effect of the 'exosystem' is INDIRECT it can still be quite profound.

Right now Indian children are experiencing such an impact as their mothers attend night-shifts in BPO / IT industries, as children are left at the care of the ageing grand-parents and nannies, who cannot give full attention to the needs of the child.

This paper is based on the premise of 'Exo sub-system' and more specific to the Governmental System. The exo-system is composed of Economic system, Political System, Education System, Religious System cultural values, customs, and more particularly the Political System, and the laws, they enact. This could be better explained with a saying in Thamizh: அரசன் எவ்வழியோ மக்கள் அவ்வழி. The meaning of this saying is: **How is the king is, so are his subjects**. If the state is violent, you can expect the subjects to be non-violent.

The Violent Present:

The reason for the violent present is due to the socio-ecological contributions of the Past. The contribution of Ecology to the Violent-past is gargantuan. The public psyche is the fountain head of peace, which has the power to confront the issues of the “violent-present” that are listed in the following Quadrant:

Violence Quadrant

DIRECT

L E G A L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective Governance • War • Capital Punishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encounter Killings • Terrorism • Drone Strikes • TRP Driven Media Reporting 	I L L E G A L
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unjust Legislation • Poor Economic Policies • Corrupt Judges • Lack of Transparency in Governmental Decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mining & Land Grabbing • Poverty • Public Weal such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adulteration 2. Market Economy 3. Environmental Exploitation 	

IN DIRECT

Ineffective government is the root cause of all societal evil in a country. Such governments lead the nations to war in order to cover-up their mal-functioning. Such uncivilized governments use ‘Capital Punishment’ to bring order in the society. In such a social-ecology the most affected are the poor, marginalized, minorities and the voiceless. Here, I want to cite a Thamizh saying: சட்டம் என்பது ஒரு சிலந்திவலை; அதில் ஈக்களும், கொசுக்களும் மாட்டிக்கொள்ளும். ஆனால் வண்டுகள் துளைத்துக் கொண்டு வெளியே வந்து விடும். The translation of this saying would be: “Legislations are like a spider web, where flies and mosquitoes will be caught, whereas wasp-like insects will puncture the web and escape.” This means that the rich will escape using the loopholes of legislations, while the poor, marginalized, minorities and the voiceless will be caught within the biting mandibles of “law.” It is primarily the poor, marginalized, minorities and the voiceless who go to the gallows. Such violence is legal and direct.

There is direct but illegal violence, which is unleashed both by the governments and by anti-social elements. Weak governments, political leaders, with the support of the police, undertake

“encounter killing” to finish off potential enemies. Sometimes police personnel, for their own promotion and reward, take this route and kill the innocents, without being heard. Powerful nations intrude in the airspace of another sovereign State and do “drone-strikes as an apparent part of their strategic interests. Such vandalism is the fountainhead for all terrorism in this world. Terrorists in the name of fighting for freedom, tribalism, proletarianism, and religion kill the innocents to terrorize the government and the people for their own gains. In a well functioning democracy, the media is one of the pillars, which upholds the democracy. With the advent of private TV channels, most of them are **TRP (Target Point Rating)**-hungry which fetches the media owners, significant revenue through commercial advertisements. Hence, they are interested in providing spicy and juicy news to keep the viewers engaged. They often report untruths in the name of investigation journalism which can contribute to interpersonal violence and affects the “Systems Thinking” in the society. What affects someone directly, affects everyone indirectly. This entire sort of violence is condemnable.

With indirect violence, there are both legal and illegal violence. Unjust governments bring unjust legislation and rule the nation with poor economic policies. In such a government there will be a lack of transparency in decision-making, as most of the decisions are made either to favor someone or for graft. No government in the world can proudly say that their judges are corruption free and many governments actually favor corruption. As a result, influential people, the rich can buy a favorable verdict. All these factors fall under the purview of ‘Illegal cum direct’ violence.

There is also illegal and in-direct violence. Over exploitation of natural resources in the name of development is a serious threat to any developing nation. When there is unlawful mining and land-grabbing, it is those who have depended on their land and its natural resources who suffer the most. I consider allowing POVERTY to prevail in this society itself as ‘illegal cum in-direct’ violence. In addition food adulteration and false advertising contribute further to unbridled consumerism.

Right to Life:

The Ecological Model that I am presenting is focusing on only one aspect of direct-legal violence that is prevalent in this society –Capital punishment. God created human beings in His likeness, which means God created human being for eternity. I consider from the Biblical perspective that human beings are the inventors of Death, Murder and Capital Punishment, because of the following reasons:

1. In the Garden of Eden, human beings (Adam & Eve) earned Death, by preferring to eat the fruit of Knowledge instead of the fruits of Everlasting Life.
2. Cain, son of Adam became green eyed and invented ‘Murder’ to eliminate his brother, whom he considered a competitor in currying favor from God.
3. When God decided to limit the longevity of human beings, God assured human beings 120 years of life. Human beings have the right to live, what is assured by God.
4. God never wanted man to rule over the others; hence God discouraged people to create monarchs. When human-beings created leaders (*who were later called kings*), to rule over them, the leader of the Israelites introduced ‘Eye for an Eye’, punishment, introduced ‘Capital Punishment’.

God did not favour Capital Punishment:

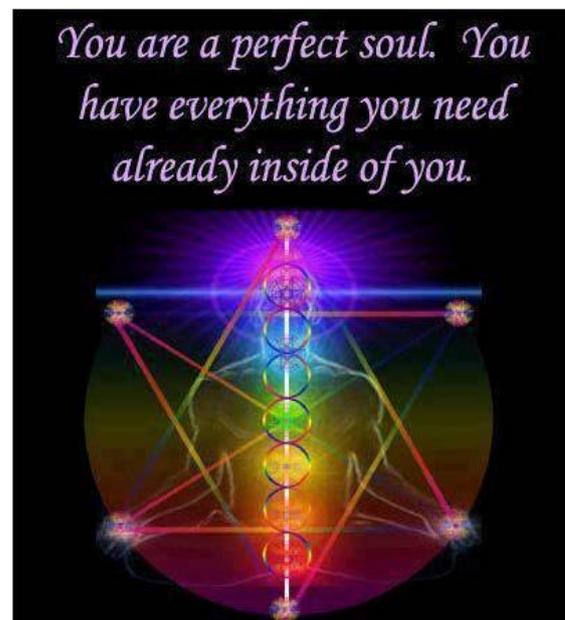
There are reasons for me to say so, as:

- God placed a 'Mark' on the forehead of Cain to give him immunity from being murdered.
- When Joshua, the leader of the Israelites introduced the 'Eye for an Eye', punishment, God made an INTERVENTION and asked him to have 'Refuge Cities' at the center of the City, with good roads, so that man-slayers could run easily and seek asylum in the care of the Chief Priest and secure immunity and protection from anyone entering the city to take revenge and kill the murderer.

A year ago India witnessed blood-thirsty people rallying in the roads of New Delhi. They wanted to reduce the age of the 'juvenile delinquent' so that 'capital punishment could be awarded to the juvenile involved in the rape. It is time for us do some soul-searching. Would Jyothi Singh (*Nirabhay*) come back to life, if all perpetrators of the offense are killed? Would it bring true peace and happiness to her family members? The answers to these two questions are a blunt "No."

In the process of soul searching, it is time for us to know that JOY IS AN INSIDE JOB. As long as we depend on external factors to give us joy and happiness, we will only be disappointed, which leads to frustration. We need to nurture our heart and mind to be self-generative of happiness, joy and peace. When peace reigns in our heart, we will radiate peace to others and in the process promote a peaceful society.

God created human beings with a perfect soul, with all the ingredients to make him/her happy. Scriptures like Isha Upanishad and the Bible say that God dwells in our heart. When you allow your Heart to be a 'Temple of God', we are sure of securing Joy without sending someone to gallows. Individuals are not to be blamed. The State makes the people thirst for blood, by keeping the 'Capital Punishment' in the statute books.



"Death Penalty" is in no way a deterrent:

During the 17th century, when the public hanging of pickpockets drew throngs to cities in England to witness the execution, , pockets in the crowd were being picked as the trap door was being sprung ... thus disproving the canard that the death penalty prevents crime. In India, the Mohan Kumaramangalam study shows that prior to Indian independence, in the princely state of Travancore & Cochin, a total of 962 murders cases came for trial between 1945 to 1950 – a period moratorium on the death penalty was in force. After the princely state of Travancore became the part of Madras

State, the moratorium on the death penalty ceased to exist and total number of 'murder cases' coming to trial in the same courts from 1951 to 1956 were 967. This study is particularly important because it shows that even when the death sentence was commonly employed as the main punishment for murder; it had no additional deterrent effect on the murder rate. **Willie L Williams**, Police Chief of Los Angeles also has vouched that the death penalty is not a deterrent by saying the following:

"I am not convinced that capital punishment, in and of itself, is a deterrent to crime because most people do not think about the death penalty before they commit a violent or capital crime."

Alternative "restorative" programs have been shown to be more meaningful and effective solutions in helping victims' families to heal.

Restorative Justice:

God has assured all Human-beings 120 years of life. Hence people have the 'Right to Life'. The **Indian Constitution, under Article 21**, gives its citizens the right to life. The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** recognizes each person's right to life. **Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)** states that "*human beings are inviolable. Every human being shall be entitled to respect for his life and the physical and moral integrity of his person.*" This view is reinforced by the existence of international and regional treaties providing for the abolition of the death penalty, notably the second optional protocol of the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989**. The State cannot kill in the name of the people. Hence, Restorative Justice is the only option as an alternative to Capital Punishment.

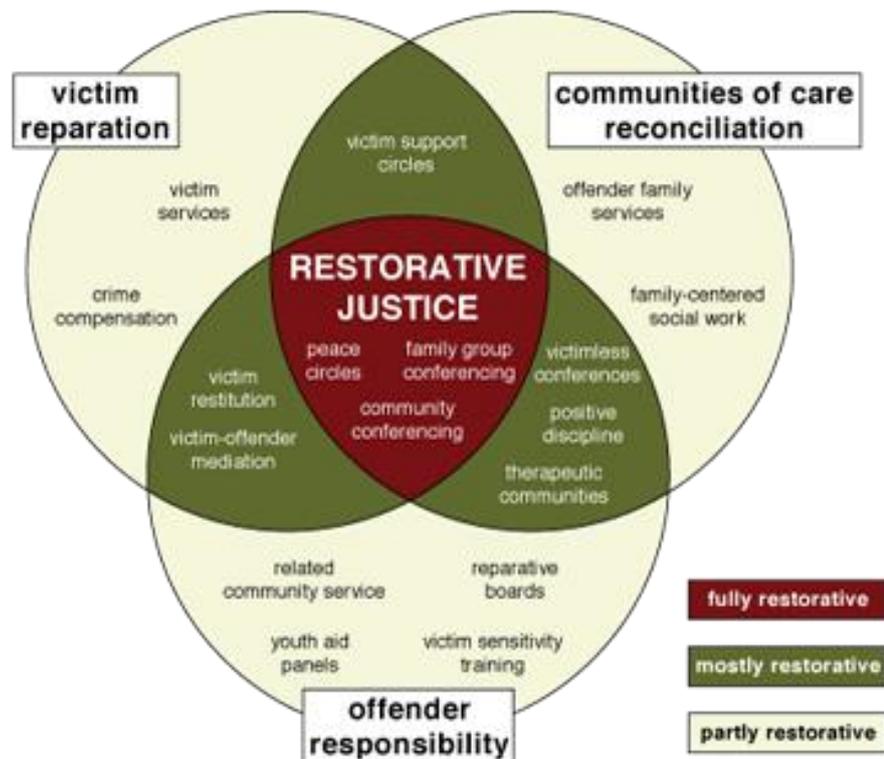
Restorative justice includes programs such as victim-offender mediation, reparative probation, restitution programs and community service programs. Restorative Justice could be explained as below:

Restorative justice is a way of seeing crime as more than breaking the law – it also causes harm to people, relationships, and the community. Therefore a just response must address those harms as well. It is a system of criminal justice which focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large.

Restorative justice is a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by the criminal behavior. It is best accomplished when the parties themselves meet cooperatively to decide how to do this, although other approaches may be used when that is not possible. Sometimes these meetings lead to the transformation of people, relationships and communities.

Restorative Justice operates on the following premises:

1. **Repair:** crime causes harm and justice requires repairing that harm;
2. **Encounter:** the best way to determine how to do that is to have the parties decide together; and
3. **Transformation:** this can cause fundamental changes in people, relationships and communities.



If they are willing, the best way to do Restorative Justice is for the parties themselves to meet to discuss the harm and how to about bring a resolution. (*Other approaches are available if they are unable or unwilling to meet.*) Sometimes those meetings lead to transformational changes in their lives. Countries are attempting different methods of carrying out Restorative Justice and the following are few strategies:

- Victim-Offender Mediation
- Family Group Conferencing
- Restorative Conferencing
- Community Restorative Boards
- Restorative Circles and Restorative Systems
- Circles of Support and Accountability
- Sentencing Circles

To put Restorative Justice into practice, it calls for fine-tuning the “Systems Thinking” of the society.

Systems Thinking:

Systems Thinking has roots in the General System Theory that was advanced by **Ludwig von Bertalanffy** in the 1940s and furthered by Ross W. Ashby in the 1950s. The term Systems Thinking is sometimes used as a broad catch-all heading for the process of understanding how systems behave, interact with their environment and influence each other. One could attribute the following definition to Systems Thinking:

Systems thinking has been defined as an approach to problem solving, by viewing "problems" as parts of an overall system, rather than reacting to specific parts, outcomes or events and potentially contributing to further development of unintended consequences. Systems thinking is not one thing but a set of habits or practices within a framework that is based on the belief that the component parts of a system can best be understood in the context of relationships with each other and with other systems, rather than in isolation. Systems thinking focuses on cyclical rather than linear cause and effect.

Through the prism of Systems Thinking, Restorative Justice could be viewed as follows:

- is a different way of thinking about crime and societal response to crime
- it focuses on repairing the harm caused by crime and reducing future harm through crime prevention
- it requires offenders to take responsibility for their actions and for the harm they have caused
- it seeks redress for victims, recompense by offenders and reintegration of both within the community
- it requires a cooperative effort by both communities and the government

To align ourselves into Systems Thinking pattern that would promote Restorative Justice in the society, we need to learn to forgive. Forgiving is restorative. The 'Right to Life' begins with the individuals, and Forgiveness liberates both the forgiver and the forgiven. An unforgiving society will only remain sick and in the process promote further societal violence and disharmony. Forgiveness gives HOPE for a New Beginning.

Perhaps the biggest reason to ban the death penalty is that it doesn't change the fact that the victim is gone and will never come back. Hate, revenge, and anger will never cure the emptiness of a lost loved one. The **Death Penalty is useless in that it doesn't bring the victim back to life.** Forgiveness is the only way to start the healing process, and this will not occur in a revenge-focused individual.



Forgiveness is the Best Weapon to "Punish" an individual. Let us do significant 'Soul Searching' and work towards the abolishment of the 'Death Penalty' from the face of this planet. This will not occur until such punishment is removed from our laws. I urge all governments to have moratorium on 'Capital Punishment' and put my dream project: "Project Cain" into operation.

Project Cain:

Before understanding the project Cain, it is highly imperative that we understand the origin of Death Penalty.

I want to emphasize, the 'Death Penalty' is a human invention. In the process of having domain over the animals, human beings started traumatizing animals by killing them and later scaring the other animals by exhibiting the 'kill'. For example in Indian villages there used to be practice of hanging carcass of a crow while drying paddies on the street with the sole aim of scaring away the other crows. Similarly to have dominion over the other human beings, man invented the death penalty to subdue other human being.

God Negated 'Death Penalty':

When Cain committed the first murder in this world, God did not punish Cain with death penalty; instead he cursed him as follows:

“So now you are cursed from the Earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and vagabond you shall be on the Earth.” – **Genesis 4:11 & 12**

God set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. From this act, it is very clear that **God never approved vengeance.**

The Commandments given by God to both **Manu** (Noah) and Moses prohibit: Murder; but God did not advocate vengeance among people. This concept is very much supported by the following verses:

“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbors as yourself; as I am the Lord.” - **Leviticus 19:18**

Origin of Capital Punishment:

The Bible also serves a history book of the World. God brought the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt out of compassion. But these liberated slaves, later became hegemonic about their religiosity and invented Capital Punishment, which is evident in the following verses from the Bible: **Deut 13: 6-10 and 17:5**. This occurred around 1330 B.C. Capital Punishment was then put into practice to consolidate the allegiance of Israelites to their God, whom they called –Jehovah. Capital Punishment was later extended for other offences like adultery and murder. Once again, Jehovah made an intervention and asked them to build '**Cities of Refuge**', so that manslayers could escape such punishment. When Babylonians colonized the Israelites, in the 8th century B.C., the Babylonians systemized the practice of death penalty, which they learnt from the Israelites and later the Roman made 'death penalty' more brutal.

Jesus the First Abolitionist:

Jesus took a daring stand when the woman who was caught in adultery and was about to be stoned. His prophetic statement: *"He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone"* (John 8:7), saved her life from those who caught her sinning. In addition Jesus simply said:

"Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8:11).

Jesus stopped the execution of the woman who was caught in adultery.

Project Cain:

The Ecological Model - Project Cain of the Sages of the New Covenant is a proactive solution to Capital Punishment.

Why Project Cain:

1. Project Cain gives a chance for death row prisoners to have a New Life, in the event of any future DNA test results or confession favoring their innocence
2. Project Cain, gives an individual the opportunity to lead a full God's pre-determined life-span.

Our Belief:

- We condemn the crime; but love the predator of crime.
- We believe in the power of transformation and productive use of these prisoners.

The Project:

I propose three sample projects.

First Project:

There are 477 prisoners who are facing death row in India. As a trial project, we urge the government of India to allot a place and resources, where 12 inmates could be accommodated in a remote place. This place will function as an ashram. The qualification to enter this ashram is for those, whose mercy petitions have been rejected by the President of India and Stay petitions to execute have been rejected as well. The family members will have to understand / believe that the one who was condemned to death is no more; as he will start a new life as an ashramite with me.

Second Project:

During British rule, incorrigible prisoners from India were sent to Andaman Island to start a new life in a distant place, in accessible to the friends and relatives of the convicts. Similarly, if India can enter into a bi-lateral relationship with any of its many friendly countries and agree that a portion of

the Indian Embassy in said country can be used as an ashram for 12 prisoners facing death row who may be permitted to live in exile along with me.

Third Project:

Several States in USA still practice death penalty. The United States USA could explore with the Government of India a similar situation where an ashram could be created in the US embassy in India, where 12 prisoners facing death row in USA could live in exile in India as ashramites along with me.

Life in the Ashram:

All the 12 inmates would have to accept me their *Guru* and the ashram will function like a 'vanaprastha ashram', where spiritual orientation will be given; in addition, they will be encouraged to utilize their own occupation, so that the ashram can sustain its financial needs.

Upon the successful operation of this project, voluntary Probationary Officers will be trained in the ashram to start similar ashrams to accommodate others prisoners, where they will be serving as the Gurus. **A long term aim will be having deserving inmates function as Gurus.**

Until the governments see the successful running of this project, they will agree to have a five year moratorium on other prisoners, who are on the death row.

Aim of this Ashram:

'Project Cain is NOT similar to the story-line of the 1957 Hindi Film: "*Do AankhenBarahHaath*". It goes beyond to: **bring-out the Aurobindo in these condemned prisoners.**

Just a Dream:

Project Cain is just a dream now; but can become a practical "Ecological Model". What is needed is a paradigm shift in our 'Systems Thinking' by affirming our belief system that everyone has the 'Right to Life'. I aim to bring about a change in the 'Macro sub-system / 'Exo sub-system' ', with a fervent hope of impacting the "Micro sub-system". 'Project Cain' is based on the belief that **the only way to fully change something is to change the parts in relation to the whole.** The process and product of making someone "human" clearly varies by place and time. Viewed in historical as well as cross-cultural perspective, this diversity suggests the possibility of ecologies as yet untried that hold a potential for human nature. These ecologies, yet unseen, are perhaps possessed of a wiser blend of power and compassion than has thus far been manifested. **Project Cain, is one such, untried strategy to reckon with the unseen.** Most of the current day realities were once just a dream.

I invite creative ideas from all peace activists / abolitionist in the world to actualize this project. This project is an outcome of our remedy save few prisoners in death row. This project needs to be fine-tuned with your creative ideas and solutions. Hence, I solicit your ideas, so that a 'Way Forward' can be worked-out so that Project Cain can be implemented and given as a gift to prison systems of the world.

THANK YOU