

not just humans. Heschel’s description of the prophets’ concern with “no limit” points to the erasure of the demarcations that create the “other,” especially based upon identities, that become a limitation unless consciously addressed. If there is still the “other,” we have a long ways to go. Our having a “spiritual mother” reflects our common spiritual bond. *Qur’an* (2:115) emphasizes the Divine reflection within the creation with these words: “... and wherever you turn, there is God’s countenance.”

Second, the foremost effort is essentially internal. It is in manifesting what already resides inside (faith, ethics, aesthetics, morals, principles, etc.) and then applying it to the world around us. If our effort does not begin internally, and its result is not visible to those within our close circle, then we remain handicapped in effectiveness. An important milestone, therefore, is our ability to ask ourselves the same question that Moses wanted an answer to: who am I?

Third, being under the umbrella of a spiritual “motherhood” provides us the essential immunity and resilience we need in our struggle in mastering the *punj chor* (vices), the *yamas* (restraints), the *vratas* (vows). Insert 19:1 provides one way of symbolizing this spiritual shield—“motherhood”—that keeps us from the “spiritual orphanhood” that has become the trademark of our extremely materialistic world.

Fourth, given the practical erasure of our traditional cultures by the developments in our politico-economic systems, the concept of tikkun (repair) provides us a platform for the renewal of our cultures. At the least, renewal and restoration becomes a much-needed rallying cry to make us realize the need of the hour.

Consecration of the Soul via Action

Almost two decades ago, a group of Japanese nuclear abolitionists visited the United States to lobby at the United Nations against nuclear weapons. They stayed at our home when they came to Connecticut. The group included Miyoko Matsubara,⁷⁹⁴ one of the “Hiroshima Maidens,” a group of school-age girls who were irradiated and disfigured by the bombing. What I found most striking about

Miyoko was the absence⁷⁹⁵ of bitterness, sense of victimhood, or self-pity. Instead, she carried a soul that was full of life, compassion, and agency.

The experience of having lived through what she described as “hell on earth” had given her unusual tenderness, wisdom, and courage. Her compassion and concern were directed completely towards others. The concern was not limited to nuclear threat alone; it was about the violence of war in general: “My mission is to continue telling my experience as a survivor ... talking about the folly of war and the preciousness of life, to as many people as possible.”

Even in moments when her facial expression betrayed a sense of helplessness at the collective human inability to understand what she understood so well, Miyoko’s attitude was of agency and *tikkun*—every small change she could make mattered.⁷⁹⁶

While Heschel’s words discuss the avoidance of the “desecration” of the soul, the work he did was to manifest the “consecration” of the soul. Miyoko Matsubara’s mission was no different. They had both realized that there is no “other,” and they lived their lives true to that precept, true to the manifestation of human agency inherent to them. In that context—promising that humans will be made into “light” (agents of good)—*Isaiah* 49:6 declares that “It is too little that you should be My servant” only.

Finally, while the spiritual concepts in different religious traditions stand on their own, the beauty with which they can come together is also remarkable. If the agency of pursuing “spiritual motherhood” and “sanctification of the soul”—as promoted by Francis and Heschel respectively—is a tree named *Radical Revolution of Values*, then we can take *Tikkun* as the trunk of the tree. Attached to the trunk—as main branches of the tree—are *Aparigraha* (non-attachment), *Ihsan* (beauty in action), *Panna/Prajna* (discernment), *Santosh* (contentment), *Seva* (service), *Te* (moral force), etc. The foliage and flower of this tree are completely imbued with *Agape* (unconditional love)—which, in addition to being Jesus’s principal message, is also a central concept in all our spiritual traditions.

It would be apt to note the component of struggle for social reform within the effort of all prophets and sages, for example

CHAPTER 19: TIKKUN—THE CONCEPTUAL FOUNTAINHEAD OF AGENCY

Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and Nanak. Their messages similarly pointed to the injustice of the prevalent systems that controlled the socio-political and economic power. The agency for change and restoration of normative and just balance, therefore, has been part of our religious traditions, and will always be a struggle in process.