The event started by thanking everyone who joined the conclave. Then the event and the speaker were introduced. The host of the event is one of the leading schools of India, the Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar in Indore. Their mission is ‘creating an environment and culture of selfless Love conducive to the emergence of universal human values’, and they greet with ‘Sai Ram’ because they are inspired by the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba (born 1926 and passed away in 2011), who was an Indian spiritual leader and philanthropist.
Question 1: Definition of dignity

Your book titles, *Humiliation to Dignity: Future of Global Solidarity*, what is the essence of this theme. How would you define dignity?

Evelin Lindner’s response:

First, I would like to express my profound appreciation and gratitude to the host of this event, the Sathya Sai school in Indore and its esteemed principal Punita Nehru. I very much thank Shyam Bhatia, Firoza Anklesaria, and Shachi, for conceiving such insightful questions, and Dr. Siddharth Jain and Tanishqua Kanetkar, for being my wonderful interviewers.

Then my gratitude goes to our respected Swapnil Kothari, who inspired this event and who hosted our Dignity Conference in 2017 at the Renaissance University in Indore. Deepak Tripathi in the UK brought us together, greetings to you, dear Deepak!

See our 2017 conference at www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/annualmeeting/29.php

Now I would like to greet particularly the 15- to 17-year old students among our audience! It is an honour for me to be with you today!

Let me start on a very serious note. Let me apologise to you! You inherit a world in great peril. You carry more responsibility on your shoulders than any other generation before you in all of human history. You will have to grow up faster than previous generations, because you will have to solve problems that none of our ancestors faced. As I see it, only if we, the human family on this planet, unite now, will we survive the onslaught of the huge ecological crises soon to come. The
coronavirus pandemic is just a small prelude. I apologise to you! You would have deserved to be born into a more welcoming world!

Now to your question. As many of you know, I have been living globally since more than forty-five years, meaning that I am at home on all continents of this planet. You can see a full description on our website, humiliationstudies.org.

My first answer: Wherever I go, I observe how dignity and respect are being yearned for by an increasing number of people. It is not by accident that recent revolutions have been named ‘dignity revolutions’.

Second, let me make clear that I talk about equal dignity, like in the core sentence of the human rights ideals, namely, that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’.

Third, in my view, equal dignity cannot be defined like a law of nature. It is embodied. When we see a person who keeps her head down in painful subservience, we see humiliation. When a person sticks her ‘nose’ up too high, we see arrogance. Equality in dignity is an ‘orthopaedic challenge’ of the art of standing upright, somewhere in the middle between up and down, it is when I look in your eyes, dearest Tanishqua, in dignified humility as fellow human being, who shares the same tiny home planet with me.

Fourth, perhaps the world should not want anymore –isms. If yes, then I have coined the phrase dignism, from dignity and –ism, and I would like to read to you now what dignism is for me: Dignism describes a world where every newborn finds space and is nurtured to unfold their highest and best potential, embedded in a social context of loving appreciation and connection, where the carrying capacity of the planet guides the ways in which basic needs are met. It is a world where we unite in respecting human dignity and celebrating diversity, and where, on the one hand, we prevent unity from devolving into oppressive uniformity and, on the other, keep diversity from sliding into hostile division. Dignism means loving global unity in diversity.

**Question 2: Can humiliation be useful?**

It’s said that a good amount of stress is helpful to motivate the person to give their best in whatever task they are involved in, do you think humiliation can also play a similar role for success?

Evelin Lindner’s response:

This is a very good question, because I meet adherents of this view all over the world. Let me cut this question into two. You mention that a good amount of stress may be helpful. My short answer is yes. Astronauts lose bone mass when in orbit, because there is not enough gravitational pressure or stress on their bodies. We all need inspiring amounts of stress. Yes.

Now, let me make a confession. I am very stressed just now and still, it makes me very happy! What is the reason for my stress? I tell you: India has such a vast and ancient culture, and I am a like a small child in the face of you all. In the coming minutes, I might fall into so many cultural traps which I do not even know exist! Therefore, dear Tanishqua and dear Siddharth, please do not humiliate me, take me by your hand like your little sister and prevent me from falling! Please stop me immediately if I say something offensive or stupid! Only if I can trust that you protect me, will the stress of talking to you be enjoyable stress!

I also need to confess that I am not an ‘expert’ who looks down on others and finds it useful to humiliate others. I work very closely together with the global dignity fellowship of more than 8,000 people that I nurture since two decades, together, for instance, with Linda Hartling, the director of our global dignity family. The first thing I did when you invited me, was to go into dialogue with Linda and many other members of our dignity family. Holding hands in mutual loving solidarity, this is our methodology! Only in that way, can we all enjoy ‘good’ stress and give our best!

Now to the second part of your question as to whether humiliation can play a useful role for success?” Allow me to become very serious.

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I strongly advise to look for dignified and dignifying sources of growth-fostering stress rather than turning to humiliation as a source of supposedly good stress. Humiliation is an unacceptable violation of dignity, and the fact that some people are not destroyed by it, and survive it, does not mean that this is useful path, it is a vastly sub-optimal path at best. In the past, the argument of the usefulness of humiliation has been widely employed by colonisers and slave holders, to say it very bluntly. Routine humiliation was employed to maintain the power hierarchy between masters and underlings. The fact that this mindset still survives today in some corners of this world, in my view, is not a sign of progress.

There is a lot of research on this topic, for instance, regarding different forms of pedagogical approaches and parenting. There is the ‘strict father model of parenting’, or ‘black pedagogy’ as it is called in Germany, which uses humiliation in child rearing to make the child ‘tough’. What this produces, is childhood trauma per design, stunting the capability for empathy already in small children. It produces obedient subordinates. Responsible and aware citizens are fostered only by what is called the ‘nurturant parent model’.

Furthermore, we know well from research that trauma is a communal experience, and that it can be handed down transgenerationally, from generation to generation. This means that by using humiliation on children in the hope to produce ‘successful’ adults, what we do instead, is producing a traumatised society.

**Question 3: Norway’s cultural heritage**

**Question**: In one of your interviews, you talked about Norway and how it upholds the idea of equality in dignity that you have never seen before in any country. What is it that is different? And what do other countries must learn?

**Evelin Lindner’s comment:**

Over the past forty-five years, I have always looked for places that manifest the equal dignity that the human rights ideals promise. I find them in a number of indigenous communities around the world.

The reason for why Norway is worth paying attention to is that it was capable, throughout the past centuries, of emerging from a culture of proud, independent, and violent Viking warriors and adventurers, and move towards a culture of likeverd (equality in dignity), dugnad (communal cooperation, local solidarity) and global solidarity (the Nansen passport). Elsewhere in the world, I observe a deep sense of unequal worthiness as a norm, even where human rights ideals are subscribed to in theory, and this includes places like France, despite of its authorship of the maxim liberté, égalité, and fraternité. Even where I am now, the cultural heritage of Germany is characterised by a rather stark social hierarchy.

Why is Norway special? It is only during the past decades, after Norway found oil, that it became rich. Before that, it was utterly poor, a country of poor farmers and fishers at the mercy of an often-unforgiving nature, which forced them to maintain a respectful dialogue with this nature. This closeness to nature has created a kind of wisdom in Norway that is lost in many other places, a wisdom that I cherish.

But the closeness to nature is not all. Norway’s marginal geopolitical location on the planet and poverty has protected it, unlike India. In the past, no empire ever ‘bothered’ to conquer Norway thoroughly and force it into the kind of submission that subordinates would have to endure in hierarchical empires — Norway was simply too poor and too far away. When Denmark ruled Norway, only very few Danes felt inspired to actually live in Norway.

During the past decades, however, after Norway found oil and became rich, the younger generation is no longer accustomed to dialogue with nature, and this deprives them of the experiences their parents and grandparents shared. In addition, while Norway was never really conquered and colonised before, its newfound riches make it attractive to being colonised for the

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first time now, colonised by the forces of globalisation. This worries me and I warn my Norwegian friends every day.

You ask: What can other world regions learn? Let us take the pilots of a plane as an example. Pilots have a clear leadership role vis-à-vis their passengers when in the skies, utter hierarchy and stark inequality characterise this relationship, as roles and authority are of crucial importance. This does not mean, however, that the pilots should look down on their passengers as lesser beings. This is the difference! It is the difference between the role and the essence of a human being. This differentiation is what you see succeed in Norway.

In other words, dear Tanishqua, even though you are younger than me, and I have two doctorates and you are still working on yours, I will never look down on you as a lesser being. I do the opposite. I cherish you, and all other people on this planet, as my beloved family. Nobody is lesser than me.

**Question 4: A dignity economy**

**Question:** You also coined the term ‘a dignity economy’. Could you explain the essence of this concept in the current context? Do you think that the developed economies are role models for ‘a dignity economy’?

Evelin Lindner’s comment:

Yes, in 2012, I wrote a book titled *A dignity economy: Creating an economy that serves human dignity and preserves our planet*. My first thought and advice for you now, especially for the young students listening, is to be extremely careful when you hear phrases such as ‘developed country’, or ‘success’, or ‘progress’, or ‘wealthy’, or ‘rich’.

All around the world, I observe that the ‘church of economism’ — the reduction of all social relations to a market logic as a new belief system — has colonised minds and hearts during the past decades. I meet almost ‘religiously’ money-minded individuals who reinforce existing vastly unequal power structures by individualising systemic problems through blaming the victims of being lazy or lacking ‘resilience’ or ‘entrepreneurship’.

But lately, I also meet more and more people, who tell me that they no longer believe in the promise that a money-based ‘free market’ can be a source of well-being for all in the long term. The coronavirus pandemic glaringly exposes this situation. Everywhere in the world, the caring work that keeps a society afloat in the long term is badly remunerated, while predatory growth pays. A study in the UK revealed that elite city bankers, earning 1 million-plus pounds bonuses, destroy 7 pounds of value for every pound they create, while hospital cleaners create over 10 pounds in value for every pound they receive in pay.

A well-known Norwegian economy professor, Kalle Moene, was once asked whether social welfare is affordable. He responded: ‘There is one thing we cannot afford, namely, so many hyper-rich people’. Research shows that the concept of motivation-through-money devalues — humiliates — and crowds out what really counts, namely, motivation through love. Money is an extrinsic motivator that incentivises free-riding. Only intrinsic motivation supports its own goals. Money must serve, not lead, money must serve love.

The very concept of money may be at the core of current systemic humiliation. Money is a commodity that can be accumulated rather than just serving as a way to measure value, and also the way in which money is brought into being and disseminated is a problem. It is a myth that money originated as precious metal coinage in market exchanges, and that it is ‘intrinsically scarce’, in a situation where, today, ‘money is mainly numbers in an account, and leading monetary regimes have abandoned any notion of a reserve of “real” money.’

I asked Linda Hartling what she thinks about your question. She described to me how she thinks ‘systemic dignity’ should look like. It should mean ‘policies, practices, traditions, attitudes, beliefs, or social arrangements that affirm and nurture the equal dignity of all humans, providing for their
full development and participation in society’.

Linda sees some light at the end of the tunnel. In the presently unfolding coronavirus pandemic, ‘we are seeing signs of more dignified economic practices’, she observes, ‘when we see leaders put the health of their communities ahead of profit (like in New Zealand), and then they discover that human health makes economic health healthy for all people.’

**Question 5: India has a diverse population**

Question: Speaking of India in particular which is the land of diversity-sometimes leading to be detrimental to its people. How do you suggest the government or the society to work towards ensuring equality and elevating human dignity in India?

Evelin Lindner’s comment:

I am aware that in India, the notion of dignity is a very sensitive one. Names such as ‘Gandhi’, just like that of ‘Mandela’, are shining beacons of dignity outside of their countries, however, the situation becomes much more complicated the closer one gets to their inner circles.

Let me therefore speak to India as part of the global human family. After forty-five years of being at home on all continents, I have seen, with my own eyes, that it is impossible for us, as humankind, to continue with business as usual. We destroy the very foundation of our livelihood by ‘making a living’ through ‘making money’. We cut the tree of life for our livelihood. We cut the tree of life that we need to nurture us in the future for our livelihood here and now.

Some of you will get angry at me now. They will say to me, ‘But look at all the progress in the past decades, and we in India also want to become a developed country! Do not take this from us!’ I will answer by using the metaphor of the Titanic for us, humanity.

But first, I think you all will agree with me that it is easy to mistake a feast for ordinary life as long as the party lasts. But throwing a party cannot last forever. ‘Success’ that is achieved by way of overuse of resources is short-term and cannot be mistaken as success. This is precisely the kind of party that is being thrown on the luxury floor of the cruise ship Titanic now, where the people of the so-called Global North and the so-called ‘developed countries’ live. When they see cracks in their cabins, they repair them with the best intentions, while overlooking the huge holes they create in the hull of the ship, where all the poor people live. To this party, only a few privileged are invited and the rest, like India, hopes to pass through the door soon. But, this party is thrown at the expense of future generations and the planet.

The only solution is to change the design and the course of the ship.

In other words, we are in a radically new situation now. We understand that it is an illusion that our world is a cruise ship. In reality we are all together in a lifeboat. In a lifeboat, internal fighting is suicidal and money has very limited functionality. A tiny coronavirus confirms the uselessness of our weapons and our money. We cannot shoot the ‘empire of all viruses’ and we cannot bribe it. Direct solidarity is the way forward, solidarity that is free from the barriers that money-based contracts erect between people, so that we can embrace the humility we need to see that we are but a small part of nature. I use dignity as a word to connote the challenges of this radically new situation.

**Question 6: Discrimination**

The focus point of dignity is probably devoid of all kinds of discrimination. With the black lives matter movement on the uproar, why do you think a developed country reached such a state and why is discrimination such as racism a perpetual challenge?

In my work I look at the entire history of us, the species *Homo sapiens*, and in my view, the significance of the so-called Neolithic Revolution that began to unfold roughly twelve thousand
years ago matches the significance of present times. I see two large-scale turning points in human history, around twelve thousand years ago, and now. We need to bring about similarly important adaptations as our forebears, only this time more intentional and better planned. Our ancestors developed so-called dominator societies, where competition for domination became the way of life. Now is the time to establish a globally united partnership society.

The black lives matter movement is embedded in this larger historical context. Since it is particularly relevant in the Anglo-Saxon world, and as I did not grow up there, I would like to let Linda speak from Oregon. She shared with me her thoughts on this question. She said:

Dominator mobilise and hang on to power by finding scapegoats, emphasising ‘us/them’ divides. Putting others down is an easy path to power for humiliation entrepreneurs. We Americans have not done the hard work necessary to fully recognise, repair, and heal the wounds of racial discrimination, some of it rooted in the history of slavery. Policing in America started out as a way to manage slaves. We need new systems of security that foster confidence and trust.

**Question 7: World Dignity University initiative, technology, and dignity**

What is the vision behind World Dignity University? How can we bring a generational shift in values and tolerance for a better world for tomorrow? How about the role of technology on human dignity? Only this year, Satya Nadella talked at length about the protection of a person’s digital dignity at the World Economic Forum. What is your take on it?

Evelin Lindner’s comment:

Yes, a new educational effort emerged from our dignity network in 2011, the World Dignity University initiative. See www.worlddignityuniversity.org. Just like the rest of our dignity work, the WDU initiative is a labour of love. The vision is to invite all educators and learners for whom dignity is central to give their knowledge as a gift to the world and help form a global community of dignity edu-learners. Dignity Press, with its imprint World Dignity University Press, is in existence since 2012.

The list of crises gets longer by the day. Financial crisis, credit and banking crisis, environmental and ecological crisis, biodiversity crisis, housing crisis, health and well-being crisis, education crisis, spiritual and moral crisis, trust and trusting crisis, indifference crisis, fake news and faking crisis, reality crisis, populism and fascism crisis, coronavirus crisis... all of them lead to a generalised ‘time of crisis’. Underlying it all is ‘the market’, which makes, for example, fake news ‘lucrative’, and quality news hard to get. ‘Stop hate for profit’ is the slogan of a recent movement against this trend. Our answer is the World Dignity University initiative.

This links to the topic of technology. I want to thank the former head of the Club of Rome, Prince El Hassan bin Talal, for bringing the phrase cogitocide to me a few weeks ago! You all know the word suicide. The suffix –cide comes from Latin and means ‘killing’. What we do, as humanity, at the moment, is that we catalyse the degradation of our ecosphere and our sociosphere by damaging our cogitosphere, the realm of thinking and reflection. We do so to the point of cogitocide, with the result that we embark in common sightlessness on our collective suicide as a species, and on omnipicide, the annihilation of all life on Earth.

I suggest to you that unleashing an ‘artificial intelligence’ revolution after our steam engine revolution and computer revolution is not enough. We must manifest a global ethics revolution. If not, ‘artificial intelligence’ will turn out to be ‘artificial foolishness’, I fear. Rescuing our cogitosphere means desisting from blindly using terms such as artificial intelligence — we should speak of artificial sightlessness when we see a new manifestation of the well-known fog of war. Intelligence means finding the needle in the haystack, it is not intelligent to simply increase the haystack.

Entirely new kinds of human rights may be needed in an age of neuroscience and neurotechnology, the right to cognitive liberty, the right to mental privacy, the right to mental
integrity, or the right to psychological continuity.

As long as we uphold competition for domination as a mindset and social and societal order, even moving to a new planet would not help, as we would soon devastate it as well. In this new context, the only realistic aim is to work for global mutual trust and global partnership through unity in diversity in equal dignity for all. So, I call on us to manifest a global dignity revolution.

**Question 8: Personal questions (ending on a positive note)**

Considering global recognition is vital to anyone’s vision, three times nomination to the Nobel Peace Prize reflects your continued vigour towards your vision. What makes you fuel the fire of your passion for all these years and more?

This is how I see the situation of the human family after forty-five years of global living. Where do we stand, as humankind? We have dug ourselves into a multitude of perilous crises, both despite and because of what we call progress. We engage in systemic humiliation — ecocide and sociocide — we shred our relations with our habitat and with each other.

At the same time, there is also an immense window of opportunity waiting for us to use. Unfortunately, so far, instead of recognising the depth of the crises we are in and grasping our historic opportunity to exit, it seems that most of us choose to stay shortsighted and myopic.

I hope that YOU will grasp this opportunity! Do you know Eleanor Roosevelt? She played an instrumental role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was adopted in 1948. All my life, I have been preparing for the next ‘Eleanor Roosevelt moment’, waiting for another window of opportunity to open for dignity to get the attention it deserves. It would be great if the coronavirus pandemic could provide such a moment!

Now comes the positive note for you!

Few people take in that our species, Homo sapiens, lives in a historical moment that is unparalleled in terms of opportunity. History does not go in circles. For the first time in its history, humankind is in a position to succeed in bringing about the adaptations that are long overdue. For the first time, humanity can fully appreciate its place in the cosmos. Unlike our ancestors, we can see pictures of our Blue Marble from the perspective of an astronaut. Unlike our forebears, we have the privilege of experiencing the overview effect with respect to our planet, an effect that helps us understand that we humans are one species living on one tiny planet. We can embrace biophilia, we can feel ‘the ecology of the living’ taking place within one circumscribed biopoetic space that is shared between all beings. We have access to a much more comprehensive knowledge base about the universe and our place in it than our grandparents ever had. We have the good news from research that human nature is neither ‘good’ nor ‘evil’ but social, and that much of human action depends on the ways constitutive rules frame relational contexts — in other words, the good news are that cooperation in solidarity in the world can be increased systemically, through building appropriate societal frames. The other good news is that we have everything needed to establish the radically new constitutive rules that can make this work.

**Message to you**

As the world watches the heart-breaking coronavirus pandemic unfold, my hope is for an exponential change of heart so that global unity rooted in respect for local diversity becomes possible. The central question we face, which we must ask and answer together, remains: _How must we, humankind, arrange our affairs on this planet so that dignified life will be possible in the long term?_
My message to the young students:

Please honour the many dignifying traditions that grew within and out of India and let the world learn from YOU!

The African ubuntu philosophy says, umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu, or ‘a person is a person through other people.’

In India, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam means The World is One Family, in Sanskrit वसुधैव कु तुम्बकम्, consisting of vasudhā, the earth, ēva, indeed, and kutumbakam, family.

Yes, indeed, the world if one family. Please, dear young students in India, teach the rest of the world this lesson!

Evelin Lindner’s biography

Evelin G. Lindner has a dual education as a Medical Doctor and a Psychologist, with a Ph.D. in Medicine (Dr. med.) and a Ph.D. in Psychology (Dr. psychol.). She is the founding president of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS, humiliationstudies.org), a global community of concerned academics and practitioners who wish to promote dignity around the world. Dr. Lindner is also co-founder of the World Dignity University initiative, including the publishing house Dignity Press. All initiatives are not-for-profit labours of love based on the practice of direct solidarity and gift economy.

Lindner lives and teaches globally and is affiliated, among others, with the University of Oslo in Norway since 1997, with Columbia University in New York City since 2001 (with the Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict, and Complexity, AC4), and since 2003 with the Maison des Sciences de l’Homme in Paris.

Together with the HumanDHS network, she convenes two conferences per year. First, the “Workshop on Transforming Humiliation and Violent Conflict” takes place each December at Columbia University in New York City, and, second, the other conference is held in a different location each year, since 2003 in Europe (Paris, Berlin, Oslo, Dubrovnik), Costa Rica, China, Hawai’i, Turkey, Egypt, New Zealand, South Africa, Rwanda, Thailand, India, and the Brazilian Amazon.

The nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015, 2016, and 2017 gave all network members great courage.

If you wish to receive copies of Evelin Lindner’s books, please contact her:
— Gender, Humiliation, and Global Security: Dignifying Relationships from Love, Sex, and Parenthood to World Affairs, 2010, Foreword by Desmond Tutu
— A Dignity Economy: Creating an Economy That Serves Human Dignity and Preserves Our Planet, 2012, Foreword by Linda Hartling and Uli Spalthoff
— Honor, Humiliation, and Terror: An Explosive Mix – And How We Can Defuse It with Dignity, 2017, Foreword by Linda Hartling
— From Humiliation to Dignity: For a Future of Global Solidarity, forthcoming in 2020, Foreword by Howard Richards

See more chapters and papers in full text on www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin02.php

Please see several links to more biographical information:
— Search Wikipedia for Evelin Lindner
— See www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin.php and search for A Psychologist’s Personal
Experience as a Global Citizen and A Global Life Design: Reflections and a Chronological Description

Links to videos

— See a list of talks and presentations here: www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin021.php

— See a list of videos here: www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/videos/00_lindner.php

— The videos from the 2017 Annual Conference of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies in Indore, hosted by the Renaissance University: www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/annualmeeting/29.php#videos


— ‘On Dignity and Humiliation’, University of Oslo, Norway, 2019: https://youtu.be/WeXR80zeM


— The 33rd Annual Conference of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies in the Brazilian Amazon:
— ‘Please Meet and Connect!’ Lecture given at the Instituto Humana in Mosqueiro, Belém, Amazonian State of Pará: https://youtu.be/VOlbsH_5ETI

— Evelin Lindner’s most recent presentation at the United Nations: ‘How Dignity and Humiliation Inform Conflict, Including at the Work Place, Particularly in a Global Setting (Pdf of Powerpoint)’, reflections shared with the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services (UNOMS) in New York City on November 30, 2017: https://youtu.be/LypSknd3ww

Evelin Lindner, 2020