Spiritual Foundations of Global Interaction
- The Indian Perspective -

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1. The Need of Global Interaction:

the nature of human existence is such that one cannot live singly: one needs the so-called 'others'. The concept of

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'independence' logically leads to the concept of 'inter-dependence'. 'I am independent' practically means that my needs and aspirations are fulfilled without much struggle and that I achieve my desired goal without limitation or obstruction. But the question is: how can this happy situation be achieved just by myself without interacting with others? Even for the fulfillment of my dire needs, the involvement of others is necessary; they help create the situation in which I can find the provision for my needs. However, in turn I too help them and I too directly or indirectly get involved with them. Thus this situation leads to the state of inter-dependence. An in-depth analysis of the situation shows that each one is dependent on the other; all are inter-dependent.

This inter-dependence is evident not only in the material life but also in the emotional and psychic life of human beings. I cannot be mentally healthy and happy without love; I need others to love and to be loved by them. The so-called emotional independence means only that I remain satisfied by giving my own love and do not desire for their love in return. But even when I do not need others to reciprocate my love, the 'others' should very much be there whom I can love and be satisfied. At least in this sense I am dependent on my beloved persons.

The point is that for both the material and emotional fulfillment we need interaction with others. This interaction starts with the nearest circle that we call the 'family'. Then the interaction is naturally extended to friends, colleagues and neighbours, then to the society and then to the nation. Both the demand of the situation of the modern world is that this interaction cannot remain limited within the national boundary, it has to take international dimension. Each nation is dependent directly or indirectly on the other one, and the whole world is inter-dependent. The truth is that the individual one cannot remain confined to oneself, he is finally and logically in relation with the whole world.

Every problem nowadays is turning to take the global shape. This is most evident in the economic realm, but this is working in other fields too. One cannot withhold the march of globalization even if one does not like it. So the question arises: ourselves in order that we make ourselves happy and we make the whole world happy as well in this age of globalization?

2. The Truth Of The Inner Affinity Of The Individual With The World:

The ancient Indian tradition has an answer to the above question: the spiritual philosophy of unification is the answer. The Indian seers discovered the truth of the unity of the individual with the world, and this discovery was based on experiential grounds and not based on speculation or mere faith. Moreover, the findings of the seers stand to our reason also.
The external and surface fact is that I am one individual self and that I am separate from the rest of the world, that the persons of the world are not me or mine - they are 'other' to me. Naturally therefore I think only for myself and not for others, as they are 'other' to me. But the deeper fact is that really there are no 'others': all are mine or parts of me. This is because my deeper self—the real me—is not confined to my limited individuality; it is really one with all. An analogy will help understand this truth. At the surface level, the wave in the ocean is different from other waves—they are other to it. But at the deeper level the wave is one with the ocean: in fact the ocean is the real 'me' of the wave, and the ocean is one with all the waves—all the waves belong to the ocean. The more the wave realizes its real nature as the ocean, the more it feels its unity with the so-called other waves. I am like the wave and my real nature—my real self—is the universal Ātman (the Self) which is like the ocean and which is therefore one with all the individuals which are like the separate waves. Therefore, the more I realize the Ātman (my real Self), the more I feel my unity with other individuals. Or put it the other way, the more I feel my unity with others, the more I realize my real Self (the Ātman).

So the truth is that really there no 'others' to me—all are me or my own. But due to Avidyā or Ajñāna (Nescience or Ignorance), I have forgotten my real nature (which is universal) and have identified my limited self and have taken the world to be 'other' to me. This is ignorance or illusion. By confining myself to one individuality I am depriving myself of the incomparable joy and strength which I will get by realizing my real nature. Unity is the truth and 'otherness' or the sense of diversity is illusion. To put it in other words, love is the truth and selfishness is ignorance. In the Indian tradition the sense of otherness is technically call 'Dvaita-prathā' or 'Dvaita-bhāva' or 'Dvaita-buddhi' (the sense or duality or difference).1) 'Dvaita' (duality) is also called 'Bheda' (difference), and so 'Bheda-buddhi' is taken to be the mark of ignorance. Opposite of this is 'Advaita-bhāva' or 'Abheda-bhāva' (the feeling of unity) which is the real truth.

The point is that I have my two natures so to say—the surface nature or false nature which is made of duality or difference and the deeper nature or real nature which is that of unity and identity. Due to Māyā or Avidyā(Ignorance or illusion), I have forgotten my real nature, and this forgetfulness is the root cause of all my suffering. The Self (the real Self—the Ātman) is the natural store-house of beauty, joy (ānanda) and strength. The Self incorporates everyone within itself, so, Self-realization means realizing universal unity. Self-realization (Ātma-prāpti or Ātmānubhūti), according to the Indian tradition, is the ultimate goal of human life. Realizing this goal would mean realizing the good of one-self and the good of the so-called others in one—the two in one. This

1) Dvaita-prathā tadaajñānam tuucchātvadh bandha ucyaite
   Abhinavagupta (Tantrāloka-1/30)
synthesis is technically called the synthesis of Śreyā (the good) and Preya (the pleasant). Self-realization is the state of Consciousness in which there is natural synthesis of Śreyā and Preya or of the good and the pleasant or of the good of oneself and the good of others. Self-realization (Ātma-prapti or Ātmanubhāti) is also the state of Freedom of Liberation (Moksa or Mukti or Svātantrya) --- freedom from all limitations.

The most significant and important point to note in the case of Self-realization is that in Self-realization the consciousness no longer remains confined to the selfish individuality but incorporates everyone within oneself ("sarvabhūtātmabhāta")² That is, one realizes that everyone is oneself or one’s own, and naturally therefore one becomes deeply inclined towards doing good to all beings ("sarvabhūta-hite-ratāh")³, for one feels that the good of the so-called others is the good of oneself like what the mother feels about her children. One who does not feel one’s unity with all and still has the sense of otherness ("dvaita-bhava" or "bhedā-buddhi"), is not yet Self-realized.

3. Logical And Epistemological Grounds Of The Philosophy Of Unity;

One may ask here: the above-mentioned philosophy sounds very good, but what is the proof for it? Is it not based on speculation or on mere faith? The answer is that Indian philosophy (as also almost all the oriental philosophy) is based on actual experience. Of course, this experience is not the ordinary empirical one but the higher or deeper experience which is had by opening or activating the higher spiritual faculty, symbolically called the “Third Eye” in the Tantra. The "third eye" is potentially and latently present in every one and can be aroused by following the spiritual sādhana of self-purification and love. The "third eye" of the Rsis (seers) was opened and they 'saw' through it the ultimate truth of life. The truth of life was not only seen by seers but an applied method (called Yoga) for realizing this truth, was also found out. Following the method, wide experiments were made through centuries, the philosophy of Self-realization was applied in life and the truth was finally established.

This is why there is in India a long continuous and still living tradition of Self-realization. Following are the points that suggest the truth of this tradition: (a) There have been people, the Upanisadic and Tantric seers for example, who have claimed to have achieved complete Self-realization. (b)
They have not said that they alone can have it and that others are simply to accept their insight on faith: they have declared that anyone can have it, and that in fact everyone has the potential to have it. (c) They have sought out the ways and means of achieving full Self-realization and have made them public for others to follow. (d) It is not that others have not tried it: in fact, there is along line of seers, saints, and yogins who have followed the path and have confirmed the truth. (e) Even in modern times there is no dearth of such persons/ Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vijayakrishana Goswami, Lahiri Mahashaya, Shirdi Sai Baba, Nityananda of Ganeshpuri, Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, and many others can be cited as examples. (f) The only people who reject the principle are those who have neither given due thought to it nor tried to verify the truth of it. Those who have followed the path, confirmed the truth: those who deny it have never tried it. (g) Finally, the theory of Self-realization holds out the promise that anyone can try it and see the truth of it for him - or - herself. We can verify the truth of Self-realization in our own lives and see the truth for ourselves. We can be sure that no risk is involved.

Moreover, the psychologists (specially what are called the 'depth-psychologists') point out that for the healthy development of consciousness, it is necessary to cultivate and promote the positive feeling, specially of love. The positive feelings of heart like love, compassion, empathy, etc. are called 'life instinct': and the negative feelings like hate, jealousy, selfishness, etc. are called 'death instinct'. The psychological and psychic truth is that cultivation of 'life instinct' promotes mental health, peace of mind and happiness and strengthens will-power, whereas what is called 'death-instinct' brings tension, depression, ill health and weakness of will power. So, loving and helping others is not a bare ideal but it is necessary for one's own health and happiness. The selfish one is a sick and unhappy person.

4. Realization Of One's Unity With Others' As The Meaning Of The Development Of Consciousness:

When one is a small child, one appropriates everything --- eatable or plaything ---- for oneself. The child in the beginning is selfish and it does not share its things with others. When the child grows, it begins to share its things with its brothers and sisters and with other children. When it still grows, it becomes more sharing and loving. When the child further grows and becomes a grown-up boy or girl, he/she feels for his/her family members, neighbours, friends and so on, and begins to love them and share with them. Sharing with others and caring for others is the mark of growth. In other words, love (which means taking others to be one's own wishing their good) is the characteristic of the development of consciousness. One who does not love, does not grow. Selfishness which is the opposite of love, is the mark of
retardation and regression.

According to the Indian spiritual tradition (as is common with all spiritual traditions), one can grow only by loving and serving others. One starts with identifying oneself with one’s family members, then with neighbours and the society, then with the nation and then with the entire humanity. For such a person the whole world becomes his own family (“Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”). It is said in a popular Sanskrit verse, “the person of low growth of mind thinks ‘this is me and mine and that is thou and thine’ : for the persons of grown-up mind the whole world becomes their own family” 4). For such a person “the entire world becomes one single abode” (“Viśvam bhavatyekāṇḍam”) 5) and all persons of the world become his/her own. He considers himself not as the citizen of one single country but the citizen of the whole world. It is said about Confucious that he used to say about himself that he was the citizen of the world.

The Indian spiritual tradition makes it emphatically clear that expanding one’s consciousness by means of loving others (that is, by means of taking others as one’s own and wishing their good as I wish my own good) is not just an ideal but is a way of life necessary for one’s own good. If the question is asked “why should I love and serve others and not just try to save my own interests”, then the Indian answer would be: “because the so-called others are really not others, they are my own. Moreover, by loving them I would attain my own Self, and the Self-realization is the state of perfect happiness —- the state of self-fulfillment.”

So what I do for others is really for myself. Everything I do is for myself, the only difference is that I am expanding myself to incorporate the whole world within myself. When I give to my son or daughter, this is not my giving in charity, because my children are my own and so the good of my children is my own good. In other words, when I am giving to my children, I am giving to myself. I am expanding myself at least to the extent of my children, and thereby I am attaining even partial Self-realization to that extent. Similarly, when I expand myself to the whole world and give to the so-called others (who are really not others), I am really giving to myself. This is giving in love, not in charity. Giving in love, and not in charity, really benefits both the giver and the taker. To use a Shakespearian phrase, “it blesseth him that gives and him that takes.”

This is why in the Indian tradition Mokṣa (Liberation or Self-realization) is conceived as necessarily related with universal love. Taking all as one’s own and wishing and doing the good of all is the means of Mokṣa. Swami Vivekananda in modern times made it all the more clear by pointing out that the pursuit of Mokṣa is the pursuit of the good of all. His
motto was that when we love and serve the world, this at the same time becomes for our liberation or Self-realization and for the good of the world as well ("atmano mokṣartham jagataḥ hitaya ca")

5. Meditation Practice Of Maitri-Bhāvana:

Based on the philosophy of unity and love, 'Maitri-bhāvana' is a yogic technique given by Buddha for deliberately cultivating or improving the feeling of love for the whole world. 'Maitri' literally means friendship or lover and 'bhāvana' means to mentally practice to feel the same. 'Maitri-bhāvana' (MB in short) is a meditative practice of wishing the good of all. The formulae or Mantra of MB is:

"You are my own; be good, be happy." We think of others and mentally repeat this Mantra in the form of mental talk. The practitioner of MB starts the Maitri Meditation with reference to the nearest circle and gradually extends the good wishes to larger circles. The Maitri practitioner thinks of the family members and mentally says to them "you are my own, be good, be happy." Then he/she extends this feeling to the neighbours and colleagues in the workplace, then to the larger society, then to the whole nation and then to the entire humanity. But the extension of this feeling does not stop here, he extends the same feeling to all creatures living in water, air and on earth. Then this feeling is extended also to the departed souls -- the disembodied spirits whom we call the dead. Thus everyone comes within the compass of Maitri-bhāvana, to the wicked and criminals the practitioner says, "You too are my own, you are misled and are going off the track. Realize your mistake, reform yourself, repent for your bad deed, be good, be happy." The practice of Maitri-bhāvana has wonderful effect on oneself and on the person towards whom it is done. The practice of MB is the most efficacious step towards world-peace and world-harmony. If everyone practises MB, the world will become a heaven.

Maitri-bhāvana is not a new technique that Buddha introduced. It was present in the Indian tradition right form the Vedic times, but the special contribution of the Buddha is that he codified it and developed it into a form of Yogic meditation for everybody to easily practise. The Veda refers to MB by saying, "May I see everyone with the eyes of a friend"("mitrasyāḥam caṅkṣuṁ sarvabhūtāṁ samikṣeta"). "May our ears hear good news, may our eyes see good thing." In the Vedic "Svastivācana" and "Sāntipātha", the peace and

6) "Atmano mokṣartham jagaddhitaya ca" --- Vivekananda.

7) The writer is preparing a monograph on the Yoga of Maitri-bhāvana dealing in the theory, practice and effects of Maitri-bhāvana in detail.

8) maitrasyāham caṅkṣuṁ sarvabhūtāṁ samikṣe --- Rudrastadhavī, sānti-adhyāya 18.

9) bhadrāṇa karnehīṁ śṛṇuyāma devā bhadrāṇa paśyemakṣaḥbhīryajatraḥ --- Svastivācana (Rudrāstadhavī-8)
happiness for the entire world --- the human, the animal and the vegetative kingdoms --- is wished and prayed for. In the Puranic period too references to MB continue. There is a famous Sanskrit verse referring to MB, which means --- "May all become happy, may all become free from disease. May all see and pick up good, may no one incur suffering".\(^\text{10}\)

The Sanskrit Mantra for MB is "May all beings become happy" ('\textit{loka\textbar samast\textbar sukho\textbar bhavantu}')\(^\text{11}\)

6. Practical Benefits Of The Unity Consciousness : The Win-Win Situation :

If we are not aware of the deeper metaphysical truth of our inner unity with the world, even then on the rational and empirical ground it can become evident to us that the way of unity and co-operation is the wise principle of life, as it benefits both the parties --- the oneself and the others. Both are winners and nobody is loser, it helps bring the win-win situation for both. A person of selfish outlook may acquire strength and amass wealth ; but without thinking for others, he cannot attain happiness, satisfaction and peace of mind. Happiness and peace of mind are not related with strength and wealth. Of course, fulfillment of needs is necessary for being happy, and the need is sure to be fulfilled if we follow the path of love. Fulfillment of 'need' is the responsibility of Nature(if we follow the line of Nature), but 'greed' is a different thing, it is against Nature, greed is a creation of our own ego. According to the ordinance of Nature, the selfish and greedy person ultimately perishes : it is the loving that really flourishes.

It is not only in the mental and spiritual realm that the philosophy of love helps, but it helps, one succeed in one’s material life as well. Those who exploit others for their selfish ends and wage war on others, are also losers. The winner of the war may be a little less loser than one who is defeated, but he(the so-called winner) too loses men and material in defeating the other party. On the contrary, if there is love and co-operation, both the parties progress. Co-operation is necessary even in order to achieve one’s material ends, as each one will help each other and this will result in the fulfillment of everybody’s end. But clash between the parties defeats the ends of both.

7. Educative Method Of Unity Realization

The above treatment of the subject finally and essentially boils down to the question : how can the unity be achieved?

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\(^{10}\) \textit{sarve bhavantu sukho\textbar sarve santu niramayah.}
\textit{sarve bhadra\textbar pa\textbar santu ma\textbar ka\textbar sid du\textbar khabh\textbar bhavet.}

\(^{11}\) \textit{loka\textbar samast\textbar sukho\textbar bhavantu}. 

The theory of unity is all right, but how can it practically be realized? In answer it may be pointed out that education in the proper direction seems to be the solution. But education about what? -- Education about truth of a happy life. We have already tried to make it clear that love and unity is the truth of happy life. Only those who are ignorant of this truth, follow the path of ego and selfishness and fight with each other. Ignorance is in the root selfishness. There is lot of truth in the Socratic dictum that knowledge is virtue. However, by knowledge what the Hellenic Philosophers mean is not just information but what is called wisdom. Wisdom is the knowledge of the truth of life, which is the truth of love and unity. In want of this wisdom the world is suffering. Wise persons do not fight, it is the ignorants who do. The Indian tradition hammers on the point that ignorance is the root cause of our suffering and knowledge (wisdom) is what redeems us from suffering and brings happiness. The students in schools, colleges and universities must be educated about this knowledge of the truth of life.

The United Nations Organization (U.N.O) can help in this matter. The UNO has now become sufficiently powerful and resourceful to ask the nations to remodel their education system and make the insemination of this knowledge a necessary part of the system. This type of education may be called Value-education. The nation should do comprehensive research work for finding out practical methods of giving effective Value-education. The course of value-education is, of course, slow; it cannot be achieved quickly. But if sincere effort is made in this direction and the work is stared world wide, our hope is that after two or three generations the world will be changed. The educational institutions will produce men and women of values and wisdom. Such persons will actively appear on the political scene too and this will result into the formation of noble governments. This in turn will pave the way for the unification of governments and may finally lead to the formation of the world government.