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Holiness As Harmony Of Life

Introduction

In this article I would like to present one of the Indian approaches towards the realization of spiritual harmony in our life. I am not proposing this subject with any injunctive connotation, not with any prescriptive tone, and never as a panacea for all our contemporary non-spiritual problems either of the West or of the East, or even of the North-South zones of the recent demarcations of human boundaries of our global culture. I follow only a descriptive method in this discussion with a certain personal option in favour of my own experiential realization of certain goals. I have made my own selection of the ingredients from the various foundational sources of the living spiritual heritage of the Indian culture, and I may not claim that the selections made in this presentation are the only ones possible or are the best combination for the discovery of the harmony life. This is only an invitation to those who are deeply concerned with the issues in integrating our total human life focussing on some Ultimate Point of reference in order to search for better ways of rediscovering our lost harmony, if at all we had it at some phase of our life.

The Foundational Sources

I draw inspiration from the three foundational sources of Indian classical spiritual writings called the *prastānatraya*, namely, the *Upanishads*, *Brahmasutras* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. In order to supplement these philosophical and theological sources of insights I have also adhered to the *Rajayoga darśana* of Patanjali in view of applying some of the means of integration (*sāadhanā*) as the practical ways of discovering the harmony of human life. To mention the commentators' lineage of the *prastānatraya* I am more inclined towards the commentaries of Sri Śankarāchārya and Sri Aurobindo. However, personal dialogue with men of the same lineages who have

a large following among the elites of the religious and spiritual minded people of India has strengthened my own perceptions and convictions along the same lines of the great commentators as above.

Vision of the Reality

Every spiritual discipline presupposes a world-vision which may include the pre-predictative as well as the pre-philosophical insights of the people who encountered some glimpses of a hidden reality which appeared to be beyond their fuller comprehension. In Indian traditions the Vedas and the Upanishads seem to embody numerous such insights. Though they appear to be very cryptic in their expression they enshrine deep insights of great sages about the Ultimate Reality. Such insights of their vision of Reality often highlight the cosmology of the people of the time, their psychology, and their spiritual outlooks, and the life-style of the people to whom they are addressed. To illustrate this thesis let me quote just one of the famous insights of the Upanishadic sages. *Isāvāsya Upanishad* starts with the following instructions to the disciples of a certain *Gurukula* (house of a Master) :

*Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam yat kincha jagatyām jagat,
Tēna tyagtēna bhunjeedhā mā grdhā kasyaswidhanam.*

This revolving world together with every minute particle in it is indwelt by the Lord, and hence renouncing it you may enjoy it, and do not grab somebody else property (Is. Up. 1).

To complement the vision of Reality enshrined in this Upanishad we may also quote a small piece from *Bhagavad Gītā* :

... *Sarvasya chāham hr̥di sannivishṭi*

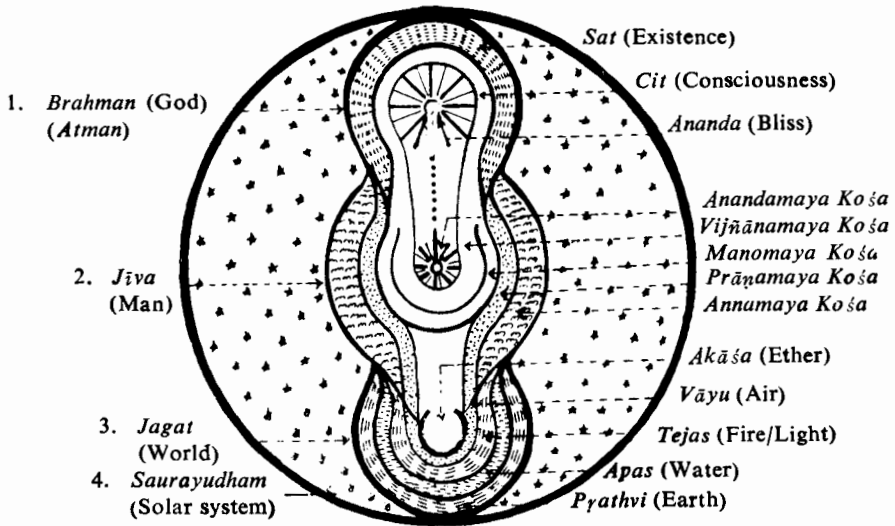
“And I have inserted myself into the heart of everthing” (*Gita* 15: 15)

We may not accept these statements as direct revelations of the Ultimate Reality personally given to any sage or Ṛshi. But it may not be difficult for anybody to consider these and many other similar statements about the Reality, scattered in all *Upanishads* and their associated scriptures as expressions of the experiences of men of real spiritual vision who constantly meditated and realized in their life the presence and the movements of the hidden Reality, which had been conceived to be One, though subject to manifold predications and appellations as the Vedic seers described :

... *Ekam Sat viprā bahudhā vadantī* (RV. I: 164, 46).

“The Reality is One, but wise men name It in diverse ways.” According to the insights mentioned above, the Supreme Reality is the centre of the universe; He is enveloping and indwelling the entire cosmic order extending his existence also on this little planet earth which is a transient and revolving globe. This was the cosmological insights of the Upanishadic sages. A transient world has to be transcended by spiritual realization. This was the core of the spiritual discipline imparted by most of the Upanishadic masters. This set the goal for a thorough training programme for a life of harmony consisting of physical, aesthetical, moral, ascetical, spiritual and other sublime human values. This life of harmony should finally converge towards the realization of the ultimate concern of human life, namely, getting united with the Ultimate Reality which would serve as the fulcrum around which humans can safely move their life and values. For example, the value of eating and enjoying the worldly goods should have a blade’s edge of sharp detachment on the one hand and a moderate manner of consumption on the other. Only then a man of right perception of values, which are transient, will strike a balance between gluttony and avarice, consumerism and pauperism, prodigality and frugality, nudity and purdah. Moderation and modesty, though are relative to the human needs and exigencies of art, nonetheless, claim to have set some universal criteria because of which we humans irrespective of our particular cultural differences can behave decently to respect each other’s dignity and pride. This requires a positive attitude to the middle way, the way of moderation. In the spirit of the Upanishadic precept quoted above man should avoid the grabbing tendency. One who has this tendency is no fit candidate for spiritual realization of the harmony of life. After all, the entire property belongs to the Lord himself. So to attempt to occupy and possess his property for one’s own advantage implies arrogance. He has given his property, this universe, for the use and proper enjoyment of all humankind; and He will have the full autonomy and right to withdraw it from anybody. This is the right order of things given for man to use, share and enjoy together. Man must be ready to renounce willingly that which he has received out of the good will of His Majesty, the Lord of the Universe. Here is the right springboard on which man has to fix his feet with correct equipoise and balance.

The Spectrograph of Reality : The Harmony of Human Life

**Explanation :**

1. *Brahman* is the Ultimate Reality, also known as *Atman*. The former name indicates His Cosmic Transcendence while the latter His Psychic Immanence. Ontologically He is *Sat-Cit-Ananda* : Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. These dimensions are coexistential and equilateral and all three together constitute the One Unity of Being, having three ontic dimensions, yet only one ontological identity.
2. *Jīva* is Man. Each human being is a synthesis of the elements of the World (which are five) and the dimensions of the Transcendent-Immanent *Brahman-Atman*. The five terrestrial elements constitute the corporeal sheaths (*Kośas*) of man, namely, the *annamaya kośa* (Vegetative sheath of food) and the *prāṇamaya kośa* (Vital sheath/Biosphere). The remaining three sheaths are constituted of the ontological constituents of *Atman*. His *Cit* is bifurcated into mind (*manas*) and reason (*buddhi*), and it constitutes the *manomaya kośa* and the *Vijñānamaya kośa* respectively. The fifth and the interior sheath is filled with joy or bliss participated from the Bliss (*Ānanda*) of *Atman*.
3. *Jagat* literally means a moving globe. It is called *prapancam*, constituted of five elements (*Pancabhūtas*).
4. *Saurayudhām* is the solar and stellar system which forms the rest of the Cosmic Order of the Reality as its creative extension.

The Spectrograph of Reality

According to the general perspective of Indian traditions the Ultimate Reality is one and tridimensional ontologically. The name of the tridimensional one Reality is *Sat-Cit-Ananda* (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss). These are ontological and constitutive, as well as co-existential phases of the same Reality which will account for all diversifications in names and forms; Yet ultimately It claims only One Being. The total picture of the Reality in its concealed and manifested forms can be better illustrated with the help of a spectrograph given below. In its concealed or unmanifested mode the Ultimate is self-contained and immanent in a transcendent manner. But this is only our logical or conceptual mode of understanding. Concretely speaking *Sat-Cit-Ananda* is available to us in the forms of our own mode of existence as well as in our habitat, this planet earth. As the *Gita* points out He has already inserted himself into the heart of everything, and thereby he is also inhabiting everything in and out primarily by the extension of his Being (*Sat*), because nothing can claim existence independent of the One Real Existence. So everything that exists, exists only because of the source of Existence as *nsch*, and that source is *Saccidānanda*. The same is the case with any being with consciousness (*cit*) as in the case of human beings. Human beings are bivalent entities related and open to the Reality at one pole and the world at the other, the latter being “unreal” (*a-sat*) with reference to the former, who alone is supremely real and permanent (*Sat*).

The existence of God, *Sat-Cit-Ananda*, extends by itself in order to emerge in the form of humanity constituted of discrete and autonomous rational beings. A primordial extension of His Being causes the universe to exist first, and along with this act of manifestation He also entered into the heart of everything that exists. Nothing exists independently of His willingness to diversify Himself. From His creative spontaneity emerged by way of *vivarta* (creative evolution) the entire elementary sphere called the geosphere and everything that is contained in it either in the mode of simple elements or as complex substances like earth, water, fire, air and ether respectively.

Man, being the meeting place between the Ultimate Reality and the transient world (*jagat*) is constituted both of the ontological constituents of *Sat-Cit-Ananda* and the cosmological elements of the transient world. The layers of his bodily components which have to

be returned back to the earth wherefrom they have been taken to mould his body are transient. Thus the two outer layers of human being, namely, *annamayakośa* and *prāṇamayakośa* (vegetative and vital layers respectively) though objective are not really "Real", but constituted of the transient elements (*bhutas*) of the material world. They are to be discarded at the final moment of man's farewell to this world. However, they are to be rightly employed for the spiritual realization of the harmony of man's life as long as he is on his pilgrimage to the house of the Ultimate. This requires strict disciplines and appropriate means (*sādhanaś*) for the attainment of the liberation of the self of man from the bondage of the elements which are fivefold (*pancabhutas*) namely, *prathvi* (soil/earth), *apas* (moisture/water), *tejas* (fire/light), *vāyu* (air) and *ākāś* (ether/electro-magnetic energy).

The remaining dimensions of the Reality, namely *Cit* (Consciousness) and *Ānanda* (Bliss) account for mind and reason as well as for inner joy in man. The consciousness of God is the Source of the Word (Logos) in God Himself, and the same is transfused into the ontic frame of man constituted of the *annamaya* and *prāṇamaya kōśas* (vegetative and vital sheaths) which are called the geosphere and biosphere respectively. These are continuities of the elementary (*bhutas*) constitution of the earth itself. Into these nutritive and vital frames of man God communicates His own consciousness (*Cit*) and while it enters the human body, gets diversified, as it were, at the boundaries of time and space (*kālā* and *dik*) to form the mental and rational layers respectively. Thus there are the third and the fourth sheaths of human beings called *manomaya kōśa* and *vijnānamaya kōśa*, of which the former is the seat of all voluntary actions and the latter of all rational and cognitive operations. The fifth layer in man which is the innermost, is constituted of the Bliss (*Ānanda*) the interior dimension of the Ultimate Reality. It is due to the participation of these three layers of the ontological specifications of the *One Real*, that man is characteristically distinguished from the material aggregates of things and analogically identified with the ontological modes of the Ultimate Reality, God. Man thus is a bridge between the realms of the Transcendent-Immanent Ultimate and the transient-manifold world.

Harmony of Human Life : Being in between God and World

As is obvious from the spectrograph of the Reality, man is a son of God born in the womb of mother earth. He has intimate relation-

ship with both: with "mother"-earth in a transient way and for a limited time; with the "Father"-God in a permanent bond of being ontically and ontologically linked by means of the umbelical chords of existence-consciousness-bliss. By these chords a biological being (man) has been linked to the realm of the Divine. The Divine Reality had transfused into the mammel "*anthropos*" His own consciousness, His Word and His Bliss, because of which man became an understanding-speaking-smiling and feeling-sharing social being, open to everybody and everything. Which of these characteristics is to be considered typically the human trait? It seems that it is not an important thing to name one trait as typically human. Man is fully man only when he acknowledges in himself his divinity and everything flowing from it. This seems to be the typical human trait, which was not that well known to Aristotle when he defined man as a "rational animal". In Indian tradition there was this deeper insight about man, even from the Vedic times and especially in the Upanishadic period. Man is an integral being having divinity infused into him on the level of consciousness. This infusion of consciousness gets bifurcated into *manas* (mind) and *buddhi* (reason) in order to facilitate the mundane operations of volition and reasoning. The inner chamber of human existence is filled with the joy participated from the storage of God's own Bliss. But in man this joy cannot be fully experienced unless there is perfect harmony between his volition and reason or will and judgement. Because of the presence of exterior elements which originate from the psycho-somatic conjunction of the elements (*pancabhūtas*) of this material world, man is in the possibility of losing this inbuilt harmony. Those adjuncts are called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* which are subtle factors emerging from the somatic components of human existence. These factors can disturb the harmony or equilibrium of human life. Yet an enlightened consciousness can control such fluctuations of life. This is the principle of the *Rāja yoga darśana* of Acharya Patanjali. Hence the definition of his yoga system is appropriate: It is defined as *cittavṛdhi nirodha*, control of the fluctuations of the consciousness of man. It is an integral system of disciplining human person psycho-somatically and spiritually, and thereby enabling him to re-discover and realize his lost harmony and relink his delinked relationships with the Reality and regularize his relation with the material realm and social spheres.

Harmony of life, therefore, consists mainly in the proper alignment of man's threefold relationship with the other poles of his

integral life : alignment with the Ultimate Reality whose constitutive dimensions man participates, and alignment with other humans with whom he has everything in common to share; and the alignment with his own habitat, the mother earth from where man receives everything needed for his body to grow, to survive, to “increase and multiply.”

Discovering the Harmony in Life

The ontological constitutive harmony man has with the Ultimate Reality and the world, if lost at any time owing to the fluctuation of the *cit* which is possible due to the predominance of the unfavourable *gunas* (psycho-somatic adjuncts) can be regained by applying proper spiritual *sādhānās* (means of realization) on the personal level of life and by right moral *sādhānās* on his social and cultural levels.

This process of recovery consists of three steps :

- (a) *atmabodha* (self-awakening),
- (b) *nityānitya vastu viveka* (discernment between the eternal and the non-eternal),
- (c) *ātmasākshātkāra* (realization of the true self).

The self-awakening process consists of man’s reflective awareness of his ontological relationship with the Ultimate Reality and with a transient world, the values of which are relative to the transcendent realism of the Ultimate. At the same time, this awakening depends on the cognitive and intuitive levels of one’s value perception of the Reality. This consciousness will also imply man’s subtle sensitivity to the transparency of his inner realm or centre of being where the rays of the one Ultimate illumine his consciousness. Because of this centrifugal radiation of the Ultimate Reality from within Its centre to the centre of man, man is capable of discovering the presence of the Ultimate Reality in his own centre of being, as its holy shrine. This is also a conscientization process by which man comes to the application of the *sādhānā as jñāna mārga* (the way of knowledge).

As Sri Sankaracharya suggested, one of the most important steps to God-realization and attaining harmony in life is to have correct discernment of the degrees of realism that exists in this world with reference to the Ultimate Reality. To distinguish the permanent from the transient itself is a great wisdom. Once such a distinction is made

and the various levels of values are scaled in the order of preference to the eternal or permanent value which is aligned with the Ultimate Reality, one can make authentic decisions about matters of a transient nature without much confusion. Such a decision is very much needed in our contemporary world especially in the West where such a lot of imbalance is felt in the day to day life of people with reference to the norms of happiness. Consumerism is almost identified with hedonism and the norms of happiness are being compromised with those of integrity, honesty, modesty and simplicity. Where there is confusion of values, there must be some ultimate norm to judge properly the values of life according to the scale of relativity. *Nityānitya vastu viveka* (discernment between the eternal and non-eternal) proposed as a pre-requisite for theological investigation and spiritual realization by Sri Sankaracharya means a certain ultimate norm. The ground of such a norm is the *paramartika Satta* (transcendental Reality) which would relativize other levels of existence, known as *vyavahārika satta* (pragmatic reality) and *prātibhāsika satta* (illusory reality). For achieving harmony in life man must be able to clear his confusion about this relativity of values and in the light of correct discernment (*vivēka*) he must orientate his life and actions towards the attainment of the Real.

Ātmasākshātkāra (realization of the true self) means the identification of the true self of man underlying all fluctuations and disturbances of the transient selfhood of man. This stage presupposes the two previous steps mentioned above and an integration of all sublevels of human life aligned with the identity consciousness of man's true self, which is a spark of the Ultimate Reality. Self-realization, therefore, tends to reach the supreme simplicity possible for man in this life, a state of pure commitment to the Ultimate Reality. By this man is geared to the true values of life, in view of attaining the state of consciousness known as *stītaprajña*, or a state of life known as *jīvan-mukthi* (liberated life while being alive). He is a person with perfect contentment in himself and is authentic in his dealings with others. He enjoys perfect harmony of life with a fixed mind in God and with an undisturbed consciousness about the opposite poles of life and situations. He can tolerate everything and everybody though they are opposed to himself. He gives the maximum freedom to others, just as he takes it for himself, to find always the right path to truth and goodness. He is the person who can experience and express true and sincere love towards all and sees the One Real in everything and every thing in the same One. The Ultimate Reality is for him the point of

reference in everything he thinks, speaks and acts. In relation to this Ultimate Truth, a man of true self-realization continues to live and operate in this transient world with fixation of trust and faith (*sraddhā*) in Him alone leaving other forces of this world to go their way. He will live in tune with the rhythm and harmony of the cosmic order, never cursing it, rather ever blessing it. To live and move in God in constant contemplation on the Lord is almost spontaneous and habitual to a liberated person. Yet, he may not be a "superman", but any ordinary human being, a farmer, a business-man, a telephone operator, a receptionist, a bank manager, or a yogi living a life of experience with God while doing his professional duties regularly with a sense of commitment both to God and His people.

The Holiness of Ecological Harmony

If we observe closely and attentively the spectrograph of Reality, which includes human and cosmic levels of existence we may notice that there is a cycle of human life directed by principles of co-relation, mutuality and inter-dependence, especially between man and his habitat, the universe. This is the point here to speak about the ecological harmony that should exist between mankind and the universe especially, the planet earth, in order that human life may be sound and sane, and enjoy the benefits of the holiness of the harmony of nature. Peaceful co-existence with the environment is the other word for this aspect of holiness which individuals can enjoy as peace of mind in a serene natural environment. People should strive to keep the living situation of their fellow beings clean and unpolluted by the waste-dumps especially of dangerous chemicals. In order that the life of an individual and that of his community as a whole may be vibrating with spirit, enthusiasm and vitality, and that their next generation be born in good health and grow with hopeful future, those who have realized something of the holiness of cleanliness related to the ecological harmony should work for the continued thriving of the harmony of lifecycles of the vegetation, animal life and human life on the principle of interdependence. In the ecological order of this planet the layers of life depend on each other for the survival of life itself: Man and animals on vegetation and vice versa. If this is not respected our little planet earth will soon be reduced to a desert, a wasteland or a graveyard. Destroying forests, strategic defoliation of the plantations of the enemies in war times, careless chemical dumps on green pastures and water sources during peace time, etc., out of greed and exploitative

industrial competition and other economic ambitions will end up in destroying the harmony of Nature and the sanity of cleanliness of environment which are aspects of the ecological holiness.

Nature's gift to mankind are numerous. We often trample them under our feet. But it would be a matter of real wisdom and insight to recognize, appreciate and realize the beautiful environment the Lord of the Universe has created and maintained for mankind to make every realm of life happy. By Nature, I mean the Cosmic order having practically everything so functionally set in motion with the principles of mutuality, complementarity and interdependence, and properly arranged not only in the interplanetary system but also in the life-cycles of vegetation, animal and human kingdoms. Until the "Supermen" of the highest species of life disturb the peace and harmony of the lower species of beings with their highly sophisticated tools of polluting the environment, Nature will act like a loving foster-mother taking care of all living beings in their respective planes as set by the Lord of the Universe. So the first step, as I see it, toward realizing a certain degree of the holiness of the ecological harmony is to learn the rules of attuning oneself to the Nature's course of action and learn to live in tune with rhythm of the music of Nature.

This attuning of our life to the rhythm of the Universe itself is the first step of the yogic experience of personal harmony, a taste of the unity of our life with our habitat. Why do people become so mechanical and often so routinelike? May be they are detached from their natural environment of life and work, cut away from the fountains of life, forced to be steeped among the machines of a monstrous factory where one is exposed to the metallic rattlings which will make man's eardrum blunt and stiffened with the monotony of the routine. Where computers are devised to greet you as you enter your office, you have no human person to smile and exchange a personal "goodmorning," and then, no "news is good news" to share. "Back to Nature", and this may be a panacea for the common place monotony of the mechanized, computerized and impersonalized contemporary society.

Conclusions

Our life has constitutive relationship with the Ultimate Reality, who is One, though called by different names by different people.

This ontological openness of man to God is foundational to the harmony of life he is struggling to enjoy. But his attempt would be futile if he doesn't take into account his horizontal and bilateral affinity with the material world. A man is a meeting point between God and World; he lives in the transit launch of this transient world. This is called a holy pilgrimage. He is in union and communion with both the realms of realities, the Transcendent and the transient. He has to maintain the consciousness of his alignment alive in order to achieve his cherished goal of enjoying perfect harmony while he is alive and is on his way to perfect harmony. This harmony, though possible to be achieved by man on a personal level in his interiority, cannot be achieved in a social and community level unless man himself takes initiative to maintain the harmony of the Nature into which he is inserted by the Lord of the Universe.

Spiritual experience is not merely an experience of the spirit, but it is the whole way life of a man lived in harmony and tune with both the material and spiritual constituents of human existence. Any human being can have this harmony provided he can discover his true alignment with the Ultimate Reality as well as his rhythm with his living milieu, the world. In Indian spiritual traditions this had been and still is a great concern in the hierarchy of values. The highest value is *moksha*, liberation of the spirit, which is not a negation of the values of this world, but it is the perfect state of spiritual freedom to be achieved by means of an enlightened consciousness.

Finally spiritual realization implies perfect harmony with oneself and the elements of this earth out of which his body is constituted. This perfection reaches its zenith in man's openness with the Ultimate Reality and communion with his fellow pilgrims. Man's personal harmony is to be extended, to his social milieu in view of his individual and communitarian survival on earth. Man has to resonate to the feelings of his fellow beings while listening to the promptings of the inner spirit. Further, he has to go forward along the unfolding of the seasons of this planet if he wants to enjoy the perfect harmony of his spirit attuned to the harmony of Nature: The bees and the birds, the buds and nuts, the leaves and flowers, the twigs of trees and the blades of grass, the babbling brooks, the roaring torrents, the softening dews, the blinding fogs, the mellow Autumns, the fragrant springs and the torrid summers—all have concordant

notes to strike in order to make human life a perfect harmony with the Ultimate Reality as well as with his living habitat, the transient Universe.