

Living with Relations

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Abstract—This paper reflects on the subjective and objective aspects of human relations that result from the interplay of natural and social regulations, formal or informal, in the both cosmic and individual spheres. It shows how their accord and discord, their synergy, can bring out the essence of life and thus cultivate an eternal bond between the individual, community and society, and the whole world. Among all other factors, proper synchronization of the conflicting principles of femininity and masculinity inherent in an individual is what society needs today to combat 'relation crisis'. *Prakṛti* and *puruṣa* the two concepts in Indian philosophy, shapes up individual's complete persona. Reference will be made to the Indian mythological concept of '*ardhanārīśvara*'.

It addresses the moral and sacred responsibility of each individual towards preserving cosmic harmony in the practical sphere of life. Ultimately all individual relations must turn out to be reflexive, necessarily relating one with oneself.

Keywords— femininity, masculinity, *prakṛti*, *puruṣa*.

I. INTRODUCTION

INVOCATION in the name of Humanity—

Samānī prapā saha vo 'nnabhāgaḥ samāne yoktre saha vo yunajmi |

Samyañco 'gnim saparyatārā nābhimivābhitaḥ||

(*Atharvaveda*)¹

"Identical shall be your drink, in common shall be your share of food! I yoke you together in the same traces: do ye worship *Agni* (the god of fire as the vital spark of life), joining together, like spokes about the hub of a wheel!"

Standing amidst an era of high technology and science, a heart-appealing prayer of the conscious human mind for such a harmonious 'world-community' indeed reflects that human beings not only yearn for relations but also live with relations. Human life is, in fact, a complex network of relations. The journey of life begins with the very natal relationship that an individual bears towards its mother. This biological rootedness of a being ingrains in it a feeling of belongingness or relatedness. As life moves forward, individuals gradually realize that no life can strive independently, i.e., nothing in this world can exist all in itself in isolation from others. Just as Marcus Aurelius in his *Meditations* says, "...a branch cut off from the bough it belonged to cannot but be cut off also from the whole tree. Similarly a man, if severed from a single man,

has fallen away from society as a whole."² Existence, being relative, strives for relations, flourishes with relations and essentially depends on relations. This paper attempts to bring out the various aspects of human relations and highlights how they help in the evolution of the complete human persona. The same cosmic principle that acts in both the cosmic and atomic spheres shapes up the life of an organism and necessarily relates it to this world, its locus of existence. With a metaphysical outlook, the concept of 'relation' acquires a different intonation and the whole world stands as the sacred manifestation of cosmic consciousness that relates each and every particle to form the harmonious world-system. This can be shown by taking into consideration the three conventional levels of human existence through which one evolves gradually— the physical, mental and the spiritual. The human body, for example, is a harmonious complex of millions of cells, bones, blood, flesh, organs and different elements all knitted together in a wonderful design. At the mental level when one identifies one's individuality, one needs a lot of care for the psychological nurture and emotional upbringing. At the third sphere when one acquires enough maturity of thought and there dawns self-awareness, one reflects on one's own self. This is the spiritual stage wherein all ego-relations come very close to dissolution. Finally, the resonance of the three, as in a musical symphony, gives life a new dimension.

II. BODY— THE GROUND FOR RELATIONSHIP

Body, the medium of organic existence, is a related whole through which consciousness manifests itself. Each element of the body has its specific function, but they all act as an organization with their own communication network. The stronger the network, healthier becomes the body. Besides this crude physiological sphere there is yet another principle, which though interpreted metaphysically but symbolically represents the interplay of two 'different' forces within the body. There is a beautiful Indian mythical concept of *Ardhanārīśvara*, which symbolizes the dynamic and creative aspect of human origin. In Hindu Iconography, *Ardhanārīśvara* image depicts an androgynous form, whose one half is feminine (symbolizing *Śakti*, the principle of energy) and the other half is masculine (symbolizing *Śiva*, the supreme consciousness). Always projected in a unified state of relationship, this concept emphasizes that it is the union of these two inseparable principles that creates this world. However, in the ideal state of complete dissolution they remain pacified with stainless purity and as *One Eternal Being*. In the terminology of the *Sāṃkhya* philosophy, these two have been

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referred to as *prakṛti* (matter) and *puruṣa* (consciousness) respectively. *Prakṛti* is the ever active dynamic principle of creation functioning through *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, the three related constituents that are compositely regarded as *Prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* is the inactive, formless, enlightened principle of consciousness as such. Though different from each other yet without the close proximity of these two cosmic principles there can be no relation between them and hence no creation. Our mind-body structure is the creation of *prakṛti* and the self, the spirit is the *puruṣa*. Thus, the seemingly opposite forces of matter and consciousness stand in an eternal relationship, one complementing the other. Even in most of the world religions it is described that the Lord of Creation split *Itself* to create these two opposites. For example, in both Japanese and Chinese mythologies, one finds reference to this. The Japanese principle of *In* is the feminine and *Yo* is the masculine, and they being inseparable everything in this world is a compendium of them. Similarly, the Chinese concept of *Yin*, feminine power, and *Yang*, masculinity, are complementary to each other. Together they create a complete whole.

Now, since in an individual both the masculine and feminine traits co-exist, the longing for relation is not a superimposition on the human character; rather, it is a basic necessity for existential survival. Psychological researches have also proved the bisexual nature of human being. The fact that human life begins with duality fused into one, one extends this relationship outside the orbit of dual-periphery. There are other sorts of 'intra-inter-relationships' also, which one necessarily cultivates in life. One has to explore the different facets of all sorts of formal-informal, subjective-objective, individual-communal, relations that one owes to the family, society and nature.

III. MIND— THE BIRTH CHAMBER OF DUALITY

As human being proceeds in its journey it encounters lot of barriers and conflicts, disturbances and turmoil both in the external and internal realms. There are semantic barriers, personal barriers and emotional or psychological barriers that not only prevent the mutual understanding but also jeopardize the network of relationships. Such discordances are often found in our political scenario as well as in our family. These are not at all suitable to one's nature because they disrupt one's social, cultural, environmental and emotional set up. These often alienate one individual from the other, from one's family, from nature as a whole and tragically from one's own self, and the threat of discord or dissonance comes in play in one's life. But, how to tune this cord of conflict to ensure a peaceful and tranquil existence? In order to enhance a strong bond of relationship one needs a strong communicative skill, an emotional rapport to open up the mind and cultivation of human values. The reason for disharmony in interpersonal relationships can be traced down to the human psyche, which is the birth chamber of all dualities. Among all other factors, proper synchronization of the apparently conflicting principles of femininity and masculinity inherent in an individual is what

society needs today. The seed of this conflicting relationship is, first of all, the skeptic mind which fails to trust the 'other'. The doubt for the 'other' must be combated with the handful of trust in one's baggage. The 'relation crisis' cannot be overcome without these arms of 'trust' 'love' and 'respect' for fellow beings. In the present circumstances, internet communicating tools such as the face-book, twitter, timelines, instagram etc., claim to be the flag-bearer of promoting relationship, yet the threat continues to exist for the dream concept of a unified world.

Human life is tormented between needs and desires, reality and dream, actuality and potentiality. Each individual has some basic physiological needs that can be fulfilled only through its interdependence on others. Relation with this 'other' not only helps it survive, but also the journey of self-realization passes through this 'other'. Constant encounter of dualities in the inner world enhances this urge for relationship and then the mind searches for its identity amidst the social surrounding. This is the striving towards 'locatedness'. The individual wants to situate itself and be a concrete notable part of society. Individual thought-evolution traverses along the path of consonance and dissonance, and then towards resonance. Just as the musical tones of different frequencies collectively create the musical notes, which further create music, in the same way individual thoughts can be channelized to bring in harmony in the society. When there is concurrence of harmonic overtones there is consonance, whereas if there is no such synchronization there is dissonance. The music thus created haunts the mind and has a vibrating and reflective effect. This is resonance. Mere discreet noise does not make music; there should be the rhythmic relation among the notes. Here one might be reminded of Leibnitz's concept of pre-established relationship. He says in his famous work *Monadology* that although each individual monad is independent and self-sufficient yet it is always in tune with other individual monads. Though they are said to be 'windowless', they 'mirror' the whole universe because of their reflective capacity. For example, the various musical instruments in an orchestra have their own individual role and voice, yet when they function together they produce a unique and one symphony without following each other on the stage. Similarly, human beings have separate and independent identity yet when they work together they create an assemblage of thought which is beneficial for all.

One has to learn that strife or conflict allows one to understand the others' point of view, because that helps one to enrich one's thought-content. No doubt, one has to accommodate the opposite views and different thought waves too in order to survive, since one cannot remain in isolation. One has to work at two levels— to keep one's identity intact while at the same time respond to the call of others. In order to balance the two extremes one need to go beyond these to nourish healthy relationship. Or more generally, one has to tactfully manage the subtle cords of relationships to be in tune not only with the society but also with one's self.

IV. SELF— THE ABODE OF RELATION-RESONANCE

Once the 'I' is related to the 'others', relationship gets defined in a new thought-frame. There is a transition of the ego from the narrow sphere to a broader spectrum. We have seen in the first two sections of this paper, the interplay of physical and mental conflicts, and how to resolve them. Now here, let us reflect on this transition, the 'going beyond', when the duality with which the journey began gets to be addressed from both subjective and objective perspectives.

Let us go back to the previous concept of *Ardhanārīśvara*. This related whole is the symbolic unification of all conflicts, elements and principles. Signifying the centrifugal and centripetal forces this idealistic notion of *Ardhanārīśvara* shows that ultimately all 'other-relationships' end up in becoming reflexive in character. Human beings need to make this unification a permanent signature of their lifestyle. The centrifugal force that is active in the outward social sphere attaches and relates the being with others. The individual is then a part of the whole universe. On the other hand, the centripetal force draws oneself within and relates the being to its own thought-world. The self, here, after completing its journey through the 'other', returns back as a related unified whole to its own nesting ground. It realizes its nature as the microcosm that exists in its own accord but in complete relation with the macrocosm. In the beginning of this paper, the invocation to the God of fire as the vital spark of life actually is a cry of the soul to get related to others and yoke its whole essence to the conscious existence of the cosmic principle. Aptly indeed Albert Einstein declared in an interview that "Everything is determined...by forces over which we have no control. It is determined for the insect as well as for the star. Human beings, vegetables, or cosmic dust— we all dance to a mysterious tune, intoned in the distance by an invisible piper."³

V. CONCLUSION

This paper proceeds to conclude with a metaphysical intonation that ultimately all individual relations must turn out to be reflective, necessarily relating one with oneself, since this world is regarded as the sacred manifestation of cosmic consciousness. The *Vedas* even refer to community and society as the offspring of the *Divine*. This clearly addresses the moral and sacred responsibility of each individual towards preserving cosmic harmony, reflecting on the practical aspects of life that flourishes with relationships. Ancient Indian philosophy has thus personified nature and offered prayers for the gratification of every minute particle of Mother Nature, including both the animate and the inanimate worlds. This is reflected through the utterance of the hymn of *Tarpaṇ*. *Tarpaṇ* is the ritual of offering water to the departed souls and whole world throbbing with life all around. It is recited during the Autumn session prior to the first moon (*Mahālayā*) before the auspicious Durga puja festival in India. The hymn goes as follows—

Ābrahmabhuvanānllokā devarsipitrmanavah

Ṭṛpyantu pitaraḥ sarve māṛmātāmahādayaḥ

Aītakulakoṭinām saptadvīpanivāsinām

Mayā dattena toyena ṛpyantu bhuvanatrayam ||

The thought imparted here is, may all the worlds starting from *Brahman* (the Supreme Reality) to all the visible worlds, gods, truth seers, *Manu* (the progenitor of mankind) and others, human beings, ancestors, and those residing in the seven islands, be gratified through the water that I offer to the three worlds, the whole universe. Now, where else but in the pious soul can we find respect for eternal and universal relationship and such a submissive yearning for the whole cosmic being!

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- [3] Albert Einstein declared this in an interview by G.S. Viereck, October 26, 1929, Reprinted in "Glimpses of the Great", 1930.