

# Harmonious Conflict: Confluence of Thoughts

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**Abstract**— Conflict lies at the very root of man's existence. The present paper seeks to show how this conflict moulds man's thoughts, defines his distinct identity and also relates him to the entire world. The seeds of harmony lie within conflict. But if conflict takes a negative turn in the form of violence and destruction then it must be resolved.

This paper explores some possible means to resolve such negative oppositions. Besides opposition, there is also an underlying unity encircling the entire cosmos and every individual being. This paper shows that individuals may realize it through the confluence or reconciliation of their apparently conflicting thoughts. This would be possible through the cultivation of some moral values.

The paper would focus upon the Buddhists' ideal of *pañcaśīla*; the *Jaina* doctrine of *anekāntavāda*, the *Sāmkhya* metaphysical principles of *sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* that help in the evolution of human persona.

**Keywords**— Harmony, Negative conflict, Moral value, Confluence.

## I. INTRODUCTION

EVER since the dawn of human civilization mankind has always desired a peaceful and harmonious life and existence. But paradoxically conflict characterizes the very journey of his life on this earth. The present paper seeks to show how such conflict moulds man's thoughts, defines his distinct identity and gives a positive and dynamic turn to human life and society. However, this paper would also like to point out that if conflict takes a negative turn and tends to disrupt the interrelationship of the individuals, endangering social harmony then it has to be resisted and resolved. The present paper would attempt to explore some possible positive means to resolve such negative oppositions that stand in the way of the realization of global peace and harmony.

The term 'conflict' implies struggle between two seemingly opposite forces. The very utterance of the term evokes in us the thought of a negative energy which often expresses itself in the form of violence and destruction and hence has to be dispensed with as far as possible. But a conscious reflection into its intrinsic nature would bring out the creative and constructive features of conflict. Such creative potentialities get manifested at the different levels of the existence of both man and nature. Therefore, although the term 'harmonious conflict' as mentioned in the title of the paper seems

contradictory, the present paper would like to show that we can realize harmony through conflict. This would become possible through a proper synchronization of human thoughts and ideas and this is what we mean by 'confluence of thoughts'.

## II. CONFLICT— THE CREATIVE PRINCIPLE

We find that the kind and benevolent Nature herself has evolved through the friction of the various particles and the conflict of different forces. Struggle and conflict therefore lie ingrained within the very bosom of Nature. It is one of the principles guiding the entire cosmic world. This would become clear if we refer to the theory of evolution upheld by the *Sāmkhya* system of Indian philosophy. The *Sāmkhya* philosophy explicates how the world and its objects evolved through the conflict of seemingly opposite elements. The *Sāmkhyas* consider *Prakṛti*— the material principle, as the root cause of the world of objects. *Prakṛti* is said to be the compendium of the three *guṇa-s* – *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, held in equilibrium (*gunānām sāmyāvasthā*). They are the constituents of *Prakṛti* and thereby of every object of the world. The *Sāmkhyas* hold that when these *guṇa-s* are in a state of equilibrium the evolution of the worldly objects does not take place at that state. Evolution starts when there is heterogeneous change in the proportion of the *guṇa-s* and one pre-dominates over the other two and brings about terrific commotion in the bosom of *Prakṛti*. Without such a struggle among the *guṇa-s* the evolution cannot take place. Hence here conflict becomes necessary for the sake of creation. It may be noted that *guṇa-s* by nature are opposed to one another. For instance, *Sattva* – the principle of goodness, is such that it illuminates and manifests the objects of the world. Pleasures, satisfaction, bliss, quietness of the mind are its essential qualities. *Rajas* – the principle of passion provides things with mobility. Dissatisfaction, anger, pain, desire and impatience are its essential characteristics. *Tamas* is the principle of inertia. Apathy, indifference, ignorance, confusion, passivity and negativity are its inherent qualities. Hence *Tamas* is opposed to both *Sattva* and *Rajas*. The relation among these three *guṇa-s* can be well understood if we take the example of the flame of a lamp. Due to the presence of *Sattva* in it, the flame can illuminate the objects around it. *Rajas* enables the flame to rise upward by the principle of motion. But it cannot rise high up in the sky for, *Tamas* – the principle of inertia restricts its upward movement. What is significant is although each one the *guṇa-s* are inherently distinct from one another, yet they co-operate to produce the objects of the world and finally constitute a harmonious whole – the created *Prakṛti*.

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This implies that the conflict among the three elements is not real, rather an apparent one. Hence conflict does not necessarily imply struggle between two completely opposite forces. For, if two elements are diametrically opposite to one another, they can never meet.

Now there is a close, mutual and interactive relation between man and nature. Hence the struggle and opposition present in the entire cosmos also get reflected within man through his thoughts, activities, as well as his relation with other fellow beings. Like the physical objects of the world, human nature is also a synthesis of the three *guna*-s of *sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. According to the predominance of the *guna*-s, man experiences within himself the interplay of the various thoughts and emotions – pleasure, pain and indifference which often contradict one another. The individual faces an inner conflict within his own thought-world. As he tries to resolve such inner struggle, he searches for an harmonious blending between them which would gradually lead him towards self-understanding, self-development and self-enrichment. The individual develops his distinct identity and becomes aware of his own existence.

In order to fulfill the basic needs of life, the individual must cooperate with his fellow beings in the society. Cooperation is the way to social cohesion for which likeness – belonging to the same kin, the acceptance of same belief and mores etc., is essential. But practically every individual is distinct, guided by his own beliefs, cultures, languages and social circumstances. Hence conflicts and clashes of thoughts, struggle of diverse and opposite interests becomes obvious in the society. But we may note that like likeness, differences and oppositions are also essential conditions of social cohesion. If all men thought alike, felt alike and acted alike; if all had the same standards and interests; if they all accepted the same customs and echoed the same opinions without questioning and without variation, civilization would have never advanced. Without friction of the diverse thoughts of the individuals, novel ideas cannot emerge and the society can never move ahead. Discords in human relationship may therefore be positively interpreted as– it redefines and further strengthens the interpersonal bond between the individuals and paves the way for social cooperation.

### III. NEGATIVE CONFLICT– VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION

However if the negative aspects of conflict in the form of violence and destruction tend to disrupt human relation and oppose global peace and harmony then it has to be resisted. One of the possible ways towards such resistance of enmity and hatred within humanity is to bring about the confluence or reconciliation of human thoughts and values. It may be noted that besides conflict there is also an underlying principle of unity and harmony encircling the entire cosmos and hence regulating man's relation with himself, with the Nature and with other beings of the universe. Hence every individual, being a member of the cosmic whole is essentially connected with every other being of the universe. But the external differences and the egoistic nature of man prevents him from realizing this cosmic identity and unity with his fellow beings.

He thus tends to violate the natural harmony which gets manifested in the external world in the negative forms of violence, chaos and confusion. However, to be in tune with Nature and realize the cosmic unity and harmony within their own selves and the society the individuals must try to attain a development of their inner beings. Such self-development would be possible through the cultivation of some human values.

### IV. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

We thus find that to combat our natural instincts of violence and hatred which are dominating the present global life the ancient Indian Vedic tradition, besides the *Buddha* and the *Jaina* philosophy suggest the practice of the values of love, peace and nonviolence besides others. 'Nonviolence' does not merely imply abstinence from violence. It positively means nurturing universal love, tolerance, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, and being patient and understanding towards others. In India Mahatma Gandhi, known as an apostle of peace and nonviolence to the entire world, tried to implement this value in every sphere of personal and social life. He pointed out that if we show anger and hatred towards one who is violent then it can make him more arrogant and furious, for violence begets violence. On the contrary a compassionate and understanding attitude towards the opponent can bring about a positive change within him and help him to realize his mistake. Further, if there is any conflict over a certain issue, to resolve it one must not reject the opponent's view as totally false as that may lead to further confusion. Here the *Jaina* doctrine of relativity of knowledge (*anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda*) rightly points out that from a particular standpoint every individual's beliefs have some element of truth in it; none can be regarded as either wholly true or wholly false. Hence one must try to respect and understand the opponent's standpoint, put himself in his position and if necessary revise his own views as well. Such empathic and nonviolent ways of communication would reduce confusions and misunderstandings in our practical life to a great extent and enhance social cooperation. Mahatma Gandhi, showed through his life and works that love, tolerance and mutual understanding can definitely reduce hatred and conflict within human heart.

The ancient Indian seers also put forward the virtues of truth (*satya*), sacrifice (*yajña*), penance (*kṣamā*), liberality (*dāna*), respect for others (*śraddhā*), self-control and compassion. To reestablish global peace and harmony the *Veda*-s emphasize upon the observation of mutual love, cooperation, commonality of thinking, willing, feeling and world fraternity. Similarly for self-purification and uplift of the individual being the Budhhist philosophy suggests the practice of the *pañcasīla* or the fivefold virtues of non-violence (*ahimsā*), truth (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), celibacy (*brahmacharya*) and non-possession (*aparigraha*). To effect universal peace and welfare lord Buddha has also emphasized upon the cultivation of the '*Brahmavihāra*-s' which imply the four fold virtues of friendship (*maitrī*), compassion (*karunā*), joy/satisfaction (*muditā*) and

indifference (*upeksā*). For individual as well as social development Buddhism recognizes humility, charity, gratefulness, sympathy, forgiveness, gentleness patience and purity. The fivefold virtues of Buddhism have also been admitted in Jainism as *Pañcamahāvrata*. Besides these the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy too emphasizes upon the performance of the *sāttvika* actions of kindness, restraint of sense organs, freedom from hatred etc, barring the *Rājasic* and *Tāmasic* actions. We thus find that all the virtues emphasize upon the moral development of the individual self. The inculcation of these different values by nurturing the inner beings of the individuals would broaden the individuals' minds and liberate them from all kinds of narrow selfish interests so that they may overcome their external differences of language, culture, geographical boundaries, besides social, political and economic variations. As a result everyone would be able to interrelate himself with others and realize the inner connectivity of their individual selves and finally be in tune with the cosmic principle. The values would therefore act as a medium to bridge the gap between the microcosm and the macrocosm. However, such ways of realizing harmony through the nurture of human values may seem idealistic or utopian. But without the support of ideals practical life, thoughts and activities would lose its essence and significance. Further without the practice of such values human life cannot get rid of the miseries and illness of greed and hatred which are the source of all violence and conflicts.

## V. CONCLUSION

However, we may not be able to make our society completely free from the negative effects of violence and destruction. As long as human civilization is there strife and conflict would coexist. But that does not imply the end of all existence. Everything depends upon how mankind interprets such conflict. In fact throughout his life human being is on and often faced with the dilemma of 'to do or not to do'. But such conflict ultimately helps him to come out with a positive solution in his life. Here we may mention about the Buddhist doctrine of reality which has been recognized as '*catuṣkoṭi vinirmukta*' by the Buddhist philosopher *Nagarjuna*. It says that reality cannot be grasped within the four possibilities of 'It is', 'It is not', 'Both it is and is not', 'Neither it is nor it is not'. Thus the Buddhists adopt a middle path in describing the realities of life. In our practical life also nothing can be regarded as absolute or certain. Buddhism rightly points out that everything is momentary and changeable. And probably that is why we are faced with so much of confusions and conflicts within our own thought world as well as in our interaction with the greater external world. But we should never lose hope. We know that there can be no construction without destruction. The Darwinians have also laid down that the struggle for life is the law of evolutionary existence. The seeds of harmony and cooperation therefore lie within conflict itself. What we need is to direct the negative energy latent within conflict towards positive and novel creations. This would become possible through the confluence of every human thought. It is human being who determines the value

and meaning of this life and the world in the light of his own thoughts and understandings. Every worldly creation is an expression of the dynamic creative power of the human minds. Hence we must put conscious efforts to bring about reconciliation between the diverse thoughts of the individuals which can do miracles in human life. The cultivation of the different human values would help to bring about this confluence by preparing the individuals from within. Thus to realize our most cherished ideal of a worthy, meaningful and harmonious life on this earth, eradicating all negative and barring conditions, all our thoughts, emotions, feelings and values must be reconciled to experience an integrated perfect life, a life in complete peaceful unity with one's own self, with society and with nature. With this hope in our hearts, we may utter the *Upaniṣadic* verse: "Aum sahanāvavatu saha nau bhunaktū saha vīryam karavāvahe. Tejasvi nāvadhitamastu mā vidviṣāvahe", i.e. "Let us live together, eat together and work together. Let our intellect be pure and bright. Let us not be jealous of each other".

## REFERENCES

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