# Global Culture and Society: Considering the Pluralistic Perspective of Indian Philosophy of Moral

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Abstract—As a matter of fact, the present millennium is different from all earlier ones. We live in globalized and multicultural world and we cannot avoid its impact on our all aspects of social and moral life. The use of information technology brings world events in our living rooms. Now, the world has become a global village. There are different cultures existing in society and the identity of culture is complex, plural and multilayered. The world has become so close but some ethical and moral questions still remain begging answers. The basic question arises – what has been the role of cultural values in contemporary societies? How can we give a response to globalization in the context of contending claims on moral values? Is our cultural identity, moral conceptions of good and bad, right and wrong getting lost in the process of multiculturalism?

In the era of globalization and multiculturalism; several normative ethical theories like –teleology, deontology, consequentialism and so on, have been described, critiqued and even appreciated from pluralistic perspective. But here, the problem is that- how to conceptualize these theories in information society and these are how much compatible with globalized world. In the present decade, social, cultural, and linguistic identities are getting affected. It is necessary to conclude this problem with thinking of global perspective and take a position by local action with pluralistic perspective. For this, we can look at the pluralistic perspective of Indian morality in terms of 'sarva dharma sambhav', Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti, Purusharthas, tolerance, secularism, etc. In this paper, I want to respond to global culture from Indian morality. Key words: Globalization, Culture, Society, Morality, Pluralism, Upanişhads, Purusharthas, Vasudhaiva kutumbakam, Tolerance.

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The present world is the age of communication and technology which is enveloped by the ideas of liberalization, privatization and globalization. Globalization is spreading in the entire world with its full potential and as a consequence of it present world has shrunk into a small village. It is due to globalization that we have come closer to each other and have got acquainted with the political, economical, social, cultural, educational and commercial understanding of each other. Thus, globalization reflects an endeavor of cultural exchange, quest to bring intimacy among people situated far apart and fostering global trade by enhancing economic activities.

However, this modern phenomenon of globalization is not an invention of 20th century rather it was prevalent centuries ago, maybe it was known by some other name. Earlier also relations between countries of the world were strong. Human settlement on earth has always been dependent upon each other and they always had the understanding of oneness of civilization. Still the globalization of 21st century cannot be understood from the idea of globalization prevalent thousand years ago, because the global contacts those days were based on shallow streams but today it has come to acquire a dominant form. We live in an independent global political economy and we cannot avoid its impact on our all aspects of social and moral life. The reality is, local culture and local identity survives in globalization. So, in the era of globalization, it is very important to expose our own cultural identity along with our own moral values.

#### 2. GLOBALIZATION, CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Globalization is not one process, but series of processes, and types of movements happening today. It is a free movement of ideas, goods, services, capital, finance, etc. across national boundaries. Globalization is an umbrella term and has economical, political, sociological, psychological, anthropological, and geographical dimensions. It can be related to every fields of daily life.

Many scholars have tried to define globalization from their own perspective. Anthony Giddens describes the sociological aspects of globalization. He defines globalization as, ", . . . the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. . ."[1] On the other hand, David Held explains that- "Globalization is neither a singular condition nor a linear process. Rather, it is best thought of as a multidimensional phenomenon involving diverse domains of activity and interaction, including the economics, political, technological, military, legal, cultural and environmental."[2]

International Conference on Role of Arts, Culture, Humanities, Religion, Education, Ethics, Philosophy, Spirituality and Science for Holistic Societal Development ISBN-978-93-85822-42-1 The effect of globalization is so broad that it not only takes into its ambit economic or political relations rather it also has it effect on us when we are sitting inside our homes. It has its affect on whatever we eat-drink or wear or even on what we think. Such things that we tend to admire, those things are also determined under the influence of globalization. Seeing the obvious cultural influences of globalization, the thoughts that globalization is a threat to our culture has been reinforced. Since it brings cultural homogeneity, so it is dangerous. Cultural homogeneity does not mean any unique global culture but it is characterized by the dominance and hegemony of America. Some believe that popularity of Mac D, wearing Levi's jeans, watching MTV, and drinking Coca-Cola have close cultural links to the lifestyles of the US. As John Tomlinson writes: "The globalized culture that is currently emerging is not a global culture in any utopian sense. It is not a culture that has arisen out of the mutual experiences and needs of all of humanity. It does not draw equally on the world's diverse cultural traditions. It is neither inclusive, balanced, nor, in the best sense, synthesizing. Rather, globalized culture is the installation, world-wide, of one particular culture born out is one particular, privileged historical experience. It is, in short, simply the global expression of Western culture."[3]

Indeed, this fact cannot be ignored that the local identities have been affected to a great extent by the western culture under the influence of globalization. Globalization has always had a great impact on cultural diversity and cultural identity. It is fair to say that globalization is killing the local identity.

At the same time, we cannot avoid the positive aspect of globalization. Through the help of science and technology, the world has become a global village. Information technology brings world more closer than ever in the history of human civilization. Because of this development people are more concerned about their cultural identity.

However, the discourse on culture and development has always been an ongoing process. There has always been a continued struggle between tradition and modernity and the civilization has prospered amidst these unending discourses. However, this question has come to acquire relevance in this globalized world that cultural homogeneity has led to global uplift or decline of civilization and humanity. What is required for the development, homogeneity or diversity? They however demand specific answers but the answer to these questions can be understood under four frameworks given by culturalist.

According to the first analysis, globalization would bring a uniform culture in the world and all other cultures of the world would become one over time and subsequently a composite culture would come into existence. The second analysis says that globalization would lead to stabilization of the current scenario and it would strengthen smaller cultures prevalent in the world. Third analysis says that there would not be any significant movement in the direction of culture due to globalization, multiple cultures would exist along with one culture. Fourth framework says that globalization would lead to spread of culture and the boundaries of many cultures would overlap with each other. There has been an obvious and broad impact of globalization on the society and culture but the assumption that cultural impact of globalization is only negative is only an apprehension.

Cultures are not something that is stagnant rather it is always moving. Every culture tends to accept external things at all time. Exposure to new and external elements sometimes leads to broadening up of our choices, likes and dislikes and at other times it also leads to enhancement in the quality content of our cultures without abandoning our own values. Globalization is associated with the idea of global village. According to the theories of Robertson, world is inching closer day bay day. From this point of understanding, globalization is not the harmony of cultures. Therefore, two pictures have clearly evolved. One form of culture is that which is local and the other form is that which has been shaped by the global factors or which has got associated with the global conditions. According to this framework, everything ranging from cultural diversity, local cultural conditions, impact of global market, globalization of means of communication to local culture are webbed together. Globalization has established communication and interaction between westerns and nonwestern cultures.

It can be firmly said about cultures that deep rooted cultures never die they only get transformed and the beauty of any culture lies in its diversity not in its stagnant form. The concept of diversity and multiculturalism are relevant in this reference as most of the countries are following these ideas. The benefit of cultural diversity is that each culture encompasses within its ambit whole lot of experiences and beliefs that has been shaping the behaviors and values of those who are adherents of that culture. On the basis of it, one culture gains from its comparison with other cultures by identifying good and unique traits in them; it makes them more rich and unique.

As a matter of fact, local cultures and local identities has been survives in this globalized world. Now, the identity of culture is complex, plural and multilayered and each culture regarded its principles to be universally valid. It is in this process that we come across moral dilemmas. With the culture, morality is also important for individual and society. From the ancient period morality is related to tradition and culture. But in the age of globalization like culture, culture is also dominating from technology, finance and westernization. There are some major normative ethical theories like; Kantianism, Utilitarianism and socio-political philosophical theories like; libertarianism and communitarianism exists in the societies, which may consider the application of rules or the consequences of actions. These theories are equally important for individual, community and nations. We cannot say which theory is better than other. So, in that time the need is to expose us to our own cultural traditions and moral values in the wake of current development at the International scenario. And it is very necessary to conclude this problem with thinking of global perspective and take a position by local action with pluralistic perspective. And for this, we can look at our own Indian moral value system along with Indian pluralistic perspective and tried to give a response to globalization.

# 3. PLURALISTIC PERSPECTIVE OF INDIAN

# **Philosophy of Moral**

Indian culture is a culture of knowledge, of dialogue, of spirituality, of yoga, etc. and as such it involves ontological, epistemological, and moral dimensions. Indian culture societies are diverse, liberal, democratic and plural. Sri Aurobindo has defined culture as: "The culture of a people may be roughly described as the expression of the consciousness of life which formulates itself in three aspects. There is a side of thought, of ideal, of upward will, and the soul's aspiration; there is a side of creative self-expression and appreciative aesthesis, intelligence and imagination; and there is a side of practical and outward formulation. A people's philosophy and higher thinking give us its mind's purest, largest and most general formulation of its consciousness of life and its dynamics view of existence. Its religion formulates the most intense form of its upward will and the soul's aspirations towards the fulfillment of its highest ideal and impulse. Its art, poetry, literature provide for us a creative expression and impression of its intution, imagination, vital turn and creative intelligence. Its society and politics provide in their forms an outward frame in which the more external life works out what it can of its inspiring ideal and of its special character and nature under the difficulties of the environment."[4]

The ethics of *Upanishads* is deeply rooted in the four *Varnas*,  $\bar{A}shramas$  and the *Purushārthas*. The four *varnas*,  $\bar{a}shrams$  and the *purushārthas* have the ethical orientation at every stage. In ancient India, there was a system of four *Varnas* – *Brahman*, *Ksatriya*, *Vaisya* and *Sudra*. Sri Aurobindo was also impressed by the four *Varnas* system of the Indian culture. He explained its significance in following lines: "For the real greatness of the Indian system of the four *varnas* did not lie in its well-ordered division of economic function; its true originality and permanent value was in the ethical and spiritual content which the thinkers and builders of the society poured into these forms."[5]

The four *āshrams* are *Brahmacharya* (student life), *Grihastha* (the householder's life, earning livelihood and wealth, fulfilling sexual desires and reproducing children), *Vanprastha* (the hermit's life with gradual detachments), and *Sanyas* (renunciation from family and worldly things). Hence the *Upanishads* ethical quest is at the centre of Being, Knowledge, Mysticism, *Puruṣārthas* and the *āshramas*.[6] The system of

four *Varnas*, four  $\bar{A}shrams$  and *Puruṣārthas* helped the Indian culture in its growth and development.

#### Purușārthas – Abhyudaya & Niḥśreyasa

The concept of *puruṣārthas* is governing Indian Moral Philosophy. The term '*Puruṣārtha'* consists of two words, viz., Purusha and Artha. 'Purusha' means person or self and 'Artha' means aim or goal of human life. The understanding of *Puruṣārthas* (*Abhyudaya* and *Niḥśreyasa*) is very important to our individual and collective life as we move forward into the future in globalized world. We need to rediscover our understanding of *puruṣārthas* on individual, social, national and international levels. The four chief aims or *puruṣārthas* are:

- 1. Dharma (righteousness),
- 2. Artha (wealth),
- 3. Kāma (desire) and
- 4. Moksha (salvation or liberation).

In Hinduism, *puruṣārtha* (Sanskrit *puruṣārtha*: "that which is sought by man; human purpose aim, or end") refers a goal, end or aim of human existence. It has been rendered into English in several ways: Value of life, goal of life, aim of existence, meaning of life, etc.[7] Etymologically '*Puruṣārtha*' means that which is aimed at or desired. It could be anything that we desire to have (*upadeya*) or to avoid (*heya*).[8]

# What is Dharma?

Dharma occupies first place among purusārthas. One which is adopted in the life is *dharma*. *Dharma* guides human beings towards performing good duties. It maintains a balance between various interests, desires and necessities of an individual. Dharma according to 'Mahabharata' is something that doesn't inflict pain upon others. Dharma enshrines within itself the sentiments of public welfare. The word for dharma in the *vedic* literature is *Rta* meaning first the cosmic order, then the field of sacrifice (Yajna) and finally the sphere of human conduct.[9] Manu has brought out the implication of this classical definition by saying "Vedo khilam Dharmamulam".[10] According to Manu, one who respects dharma, dharma always safeguards him. Through the noble paths of dharma individual finds solace in this physical world and also in the spiritual world. Human beings perform plethora of activities in their societies. Dharma provides a definite and positive shape to his social behavior.

# What is the significance of Artha in

#### Indian culture?

*Artha* is one of the most important pillars of the *puruṣārthas*. *Artha* is directly related with physical factors helpful in carrying out livelihood of an individual. Most of the people believe that, meta-physical world and salvation has been accorded more importance in Indian culture and physical lavishness is not entertained in that world. It is a wrong assumption. This world and that world, physical and metaphysical have indeed been given equal importance in the Indian culture. As Radhakrishnan says, "There was never in India a national ideal of poverty or squalor. Spiritual life finds full scope only in communities of a certain degree of freedom from sordidness. Lives that are strained and starved cannot be religious except in a rudimentary way. Economic insecurity and individual freedom do not go together."[11]

Rich and benevolent relation that exists in the goals of individuals of physical world and metaphysical world in the Indian culture could hardly be found in any other culture. Due to this harmonious relation only, India on the one hand reached at the apex of philosophies and at the other hand physical attainments of India remained unparalleled. This is however true that, last goal of an individual in Indian culture is to find salvation but the importance of money is equally significant in Indian culture. Had Indians perceived money as their last goals they would have become slaves of it. There can be no  $k\bar{a}ma$  and dharma without artha. But artha is also meaningless without the other two. Artha will not be artha if it is not in accordance with dharma.

# What is the disciplined form of *Kāma*?

Kāma is the third *purusārtha*, which is ordinarily termed as pleasure. Under the purusarthas of Indian culture, the calculation and limits of desires has also been determined. The relevance of Kāma (desires) is equally significant as much there is the relevance of Dharma and Artha. Both in Rigveda and Atharvaveda kāma is introduced in the creation hymn: 'Thereafter rose desire in the beginning'.[12] Thus, the Vedas depict the origin of things as an act of begetting.[13] Also, we find in the Atharwa Veda a philosophical hymn in which kāma emerges as a god to whom people pray.[14] Kāma is the name of hormonal tendencies of an individual. Hunger, sleep, fear and lust are found in animals in equal proportion to the human beings, but humans are social and intellectual animals. They perform everything with the help of wisdom. Animals have natural lust. They do not possess thoughts and sentiments. Human beings have disciplined and controlled desires.

The definition of pleasure in *Kamasutra* is the following: " $K\bar{a}ma$  is the enjoyment of the appropriate objects by the five senses of hearing, feeling, seeing, tasting and smelling, assisted by the mind together with the soul."[15] To provide stability to the lustful behavior of individuals, a permanent, civilized and cultured form has been accorded to the male-female relations. Uncontrolled desires of individuals have been tried to control by the institution of marriage. The goal of  $K\bar{a}ma$  in Indian culture has been that of creation of new individuals rather than being lust.

# How Moksha is possible?

Let us now look at the fourth *puruṣārthas*; *moksha*, which is said to be our *niḥśreyasa* (salvation). There is a strong correlation between *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Moksha*. It is

the state of Self-realisation in which there is no change and there is no movement. *Moksha* means liberation; it is the ultimate destination of this human birth. *Dharma* is directly related with salvation. One cannot attain salvation by just adhering to the principles of *dharma* and behaving according to its ideals. Therefore, it has been said that one should try to attain salvation by moving on the path of *kāma* and *artha*.

The *Brhadaranyaka Upanişhad* describes the state of *Moksha* thus: "As a man in the embrace of his beloved wife knows nothing without or within, so the person when in the embrace of the intelligent self knows nothing without or within. That, verify, is his form in which his desire is fulfilled, in which the self is his desire, in which he is without desire, free from any sorrow."[16] Kautilya has said that, human beings should enjoy everything in this world, they should fulfill desires, save monies but every such thing should be under the just purview of religion. The core of it should be the ideals of *dharma*. Vatsayana has said in his Kamsutra that only those desires would fall under the purview of *puruṣārthas* that are under the ideals of *Dharma*. Lord Krishna has said in the *Gita* that god rests in religiously held desires.

Sri Aurobindo elaborates the idea of *Moksha* in his words: "Spiritual freedom, spiritual perfection were mot figured as a far off intangible ideal, but presented as the highest human aim towards which all grow in the end and were made near and possible to his Endeavour from a first practicable basis of life and the *Dharma*. The spiritual idea governed, enlightened and gathered towards itself all the other life-motives of a great civilized people."[17] Thus, religious consumption of money and lust reaches towards the ultimate *puruşārthas* that is Salvation.

Thus, it is clearly stated that the concept of *moksha* is the central point of the Indian culture. The order of the *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Moksha* corresponds to the human nature. Each is considered more important than the previous. A human's life should be guided by these four ends. An application of them offers many possibilities through which we can create a more beautiful and more meaningful existence of human beings.

# 4. INDIAN CULTURAL VALUES

Except *Puruşārthas*, there is some other pluralistic concept in Indian values system, according to which we think on global perspective. In Indian value system, we can find many concepts which are talk about one world culture, unity, peace, tolerance, diversity, secularism etc. We have to maintain our cultural identity but at the same time we should emphasize the universal aspects of the culture. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, was right when he said that, we should keep our windows open so that the winds of change visit us from outside but we should refuse to be swept off our feet.

In Indian moral pluralistic perspective, we can find the concept like; Divine Consciousness and Unity in Diversity:

the diversity of the world is for its colour and glory. The universe is essentially one and there is "*Sat-Chit-Anand*" – Truth- Consciousness and bliss overspread the whole world.

Unity in diversity is the prime teaching of Indian pluralism. Hinduism has said: *Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti*, that is, "God is one and wise men talk in numerous ways about him. It is the concept of "unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation" Unity in diversity means the existence of sovereignty even after the prevalence of many inequalities. Indian culture is a great example of this ideal. On the integrated piece of land, under one roof in India people of various religions, communities, castes, languages, cultures, life-styles and dressings live harmoniously with each other. Without harming the religious sentiments or religions of others they follow their own cultures and religions.

For exploring the concept of unity in diversity, it is very important to accept the notion of Tolerance. Tolerance and sacrifice are the essential foundations of Indian pluralism and very important for community and nations. Indian pluralism considers that "*Madhava seva is maanava seva*" i.e "Service to man is service to God." The main purpose of this concept is the passion for the others. This concept has tries to provide the space where the voice of the other is heard and a strong pluralistic perspective is upheld.

This attitude is enshrined in the popular Sanskrit phrase of "Sarva Dharma Sambhav" - equal respect to all religions. The concept of "Sarva-Dharma-Sambhav" (Secularism) is another cardinal attribute of one world culture. The relevance religion is not limited to the salvation of anyone. However, its relevance and importance also extends to the construction and maintenance of thoughts, freedom, equality, progress and development of the world. Indian pluralism suggests that: "Sangacchadhvam samvadadhvam samvomanãnsi jãnatãn" - "Let us come together; let us talk together; let us live with one mind."

According to Indian Pluralism God is the father of all man. And as the children of one God, all men are brothers "Vasudhaiva kutumbakam" - the whole earth is just one family. You and Me together is We. We mean the whole world. We all mean "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam". This concept originates in the Maha Upanishad (Chapter 6, Verse 72): "avam bandhurayam neti ganana laghuchetasam udaracharitanam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam"- Only small men discriminate saying: One is a relative; the other is a stranger. For those who live magnanimously the entire world constitutes but a family.[18] This concept is also mentioned in Hitopadesha (1.3.71): Udāracharitānām tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam', meaning, 'This is my own relative and that is a stranger' - is the calculation of the narrow-minded; for the magnanimous-hearts, however, the entire earth is but one family. It is a cosmic organization. And it is an organization by the people, of the people and for the people.[19]

This value are personal as well as social, at the same time these are national values as well as global values, they could be political values as well as moral values, at times they could also be religious values as well as progressive values. If one is asked to summarize all these ideas then it could be described in one word as human values. Ideals of humanity is unfulfilled without adhering to this value into the core of our hearts, human life is incomplete, religion and cultures are incomplete, even the nation and the world is incomplete without this value. It is the compulsion of human beings, society, nation and the world. If we want to make this world great, then we will definitely have to adopt the principles of global brotherhood. It was through this principle of global brotherhood that Indian revered saints propagated the idea of benevolent humanism which encapsulates within itself wellbeing of all.

This country is centuries old imaginations and is based upon the ideals of well being of each other, self beliefs and integrity. It tries to fill the gap between 'me' and 'you' and establish a cordial relation between both. There has been a persistent mistake to apprehend the principles of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" as being antagonistic to the ideals of nationalism. As benevolent humanism is not antagonistic to nationalism, so, the ideal of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" is not in contradiction to the feeling of nationalism. The sentiment of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" is definitely continuing and persistent and is based upon the broad ideals of human values. There is no space for any narrow and shallow understanding in it. Tolerance is the necessary precondition for it. It is definitely an important medium for eliminating the gap between me and you and makes the world happy and prosperous. Scientific inventions have led to reduction in time and shrinking of distance, under these conditions it has become more eminent to spread the feelings of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam".

Even the petty incidents of the world cast tangible impact on other countries of the world in one or other form. As a result of it, entire world has come to realize that it is inevitable to maintain mutual cooperation, harmony, cultural exchanges and fraternity, failing which it would be difficult to sustain. The ideals of *"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"* are somehow enshrined in the organizations of UNO, SAARC, OPEC, G-15, G-20 etc. Through the idea of *"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"* Indian pluralism prays and works for the welfare and prosperity of whole universe. As one of its prayers says:

Sarve bhavantu sukhinah:

"May all be happy."

# 5. CONCLUSION

It can be said about the relevance of globalization that it should be welcomed only in the areas when it is limited to thoughts, information and science, when it is in the favour of pardon, benevolence, non-violence, sympathy, amity and obedience, when it is complementary in nature rather than being competitive. Cultural diversity is now a fact of life in today's "global village" and Indian culture is a living example of cultural diversity and harmony. The ideals of *puruşārthas* establish balance between the physical and spiritual world. The overall development of human personality is made possible due to the *puruşārthas*. The pluralistic perspective proposed in Indian philosophy of morals in the context of *puruşārthas* can help individuals and society come together in globalized and multicultural world. People can negotiate a space where in different and contending moral claims can find there due recognitions and globalization will help us to develop this process.

The one world culture is for *"Sarvajanhitay, Sarvjan-sukhay"* – the welfare of all and the happiness of all. This task is very difficult and complicated but we have to take the first step. We have to invoke the Divine Powers for making one world culture a reality and pray with the Vedic seer

"Aa no bhadra: kratwo yantu vishwatah"

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.

This is the ethos of the globalized world.

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