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(*GAYATRI VIDYA PARISHAD*)

Summitry vs Asymmetry

“We live in a world of extraordinary inequalities of opportunity, both within and across countries,” writes Paul D.Wolfowitz, President of World Bank in his Foreword to the 2006 World Development Report which focuses on equity and development. The 320 page report offers conceptual clarifications of the terms equity and development and in the final tenth chapter explains how achieving greater global equity is possible through global action. Primarily, the effort should be to provide for “more equal international partnership” and reforms that can “enhance the power and broaden the economic access of countries where the poor live.” The Report says that the global playing field between nations is uneven and has uneven effects on different groups within countries. Equity implies equal opportunity and avoidance of deprivation in outcomes, especially in health, education and consumption levels according to the Report.

The United Nations is firmly committed to the goals of human development. In pursuit of these goals the United Nations has been regularly organising world conferences at which resolutions are passed and agreements reached. The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, known as Rio Earth Summit, prepared a plan of action for human development. The Millennium Development Goals set during the last fifteen years were reaffirmed at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. Broadly these goals centred round, opportunity, empowerment and security.

The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development prepared a blueprint for action globally, nationally and locally. The aim was to plan for human development and also for the planet and its future. Sustainable Development was defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” It promotes equality and justice ‘through people empowerment and a sense of global citizenship.’ It implies participation through democratic processes. The main aim of sustainable development is to ensure fulfilment of human

needs for peace, clean air and water, food shelter, and useful employment. In August 2002 a report released by the U.S.Government stated that improved resource management, good governance and application of new technologies along with good environmental stewardship should be adopted as strategies to promote sustainable development. In April 2006 the UN released a report on the trends in sustainable development and the UN’s Commission on Sustainable Development is due to meet in New York to review progress in four inter-related areas—energy; industrial development; atmosphere and air pollution and climatic change.

Global summits and world conferences prepare blueprints and plans of action, at both macro and micro levels, to fight inequality, injustice and inequity. The WDR Report makes pointed reference to ‘inequality traps and vicious circles.’ It says that “unequal economic opportunities lead to unequal outcomes and reinforce unequal political power.” Asymmetrical relationships operate at all levels. Gender injustice is a glaring example. Women contribute more than 55% to world output besides child bearing and performing domestic duties such as house-keeping. Their share in wealth, income and political power seldom reaches double digits. The plight of children living in poor countries is pathetic, especially in the crucial areas of education and health. In most cases it is a journey through poverty from birth to death. The challenge confronting humanity is no ordinary one. Aptly it has been described as “a neo Malthusian trilemma of population overload, resource depletion and climatic change brought on by the profligate cashing in of fossil-fuel capital and threatening to reverse human progress.” (Guardian Weekly April28-May 4,2006)

It is possible to hold at the global level, summits and conferences, pass resolutions and prepare plans and blueprints. It is however hard, perhaps impossible, to overcome asymmetry, local, national or global. Obviously because of lack of will. But as the saying goes where there is will there is always a way.

- The Editor

“Development is another name for peace.” - POPE JOHN PAUL II

John Kenneth Galbraith -the tallest intellectual of his times-

- A.Prasanna Kumar

"I am the tallest man in the world," was how John Kenneth Galbraith, it seems, began his lecture once in India as Ambassador of the United States. When the 97 year old scholar, writer and public intellectual passed away on April 19 newspapers and journals carried glowing tributes to ' the visionary economist who defined and defied the conventional wisdom.' (Guardian Weekly). The popular English daily, The Guardian, began its tribute with a reference to JKG's 'well developed sense of his own intellectual superiority, together with a well-developed sense of humour.' He also had the rare quality of being able to laugh at himself. A story that JKG used to narrate about himself, according to the Guardian, related to a breakfast conversation between President Kennedy and the Ambassador to India. When JKG complained that he did not see why the New York Times called him arrogant, the brilliant JFK replied: "I don't see why not, everybody else does."

The Economist (May 6-12) begins its tribute in similar refrain by referring to Galbraith's First Law displayed in his sitting room. "Modesty is a vastly overrated virtue." The Economist continues: "At six foot eight, he was a giant. Intellectually he was equally towering, a man who spent more than seven decades either on the stage of American public policy — as a bureaucrat in Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, a confidante of John Kennedy and adviser to countless other democrats—or loudly lambasting Washington from off stage left, as a Harvard Professor."

Born on October 15,1908 in Iona Station, Ontario Canada, Galbraith obtained a B.Sc degree from Ontario Agricultural College. He took an M.A. from the University of California, Berkeley in 1932 and the Ph.D. two years later. He worked as a tutor in economics at Harvard from 1934 to 1939. He spent a year at Cambridge University as a social science research fellow. At the age of 32 he joined Franklin Roosevelt's administration as in-charge of price controls in the US. According to the Guardian this experience had two profound effects on Galbraith's thinking. "First he became one of the staunchest advocates of a prices and incomes policy designed to combine full employment with a reasonable degree of price stability. Second it drew his attention to the extent of industrial concentration and oligopolistic pricing practices in the US."

JKG was a prolific writer, always witty and thought provoking and at times provocative. *American Capitalism: The Concept of Countervailing Power* (1952) and *Great*

Crash (1955) brought him recognition. *The Affluent Society* (1958) made him famous. The paradox of private affluence amid public squalor was brought out in his own inimitable style. Among the books that followed were *The New Industrial State*(1967) *Economics and the Public Purpose*(1974) and *The Culture of Contentment* (1992). Galbraith was critical of the monetarist doctrines of Milton Friedman and Arthur Laffer. He famously described " the trickle down economics of Reagan-Bush era as advocating feeding the horse more oats because some would pass through to the road for the sparrows." (Guardian Weekly)

The Economist evaluates JKG's place as a public intellectual and economist. For several decades, writes the Economist " Mr Galbraith— much to the chagrin of his academic colleagues—could claim to be the best known economist in the world. His books, more than 40 of them, were spectacularly successful. All this made him an extraordinary public intellectual.In many eyes, and perhaps his own, Mr Galbraith was America's Great Liberal Economist, the intellectual heir to John Maynard Keynes whose contributions to economics are underappreciated by a profession obsessed with mathematical formulae." The journal makes a reference to Galbraith's wit and humour. JKG once wrote that "Economists are economical, among other things, of ideas; most make those of their graduate days last a lifetime." Galbraith identified the greatest problem of economics as "its wilful denial of the presence of power and political interests."

The last paragraph of the Economist's tribute to JKG must be read by all, especially the senior citizens. It reads: "A decade ago Mr Galbraith lamented that old age brought an annoying affliction called the "Still Syndrome". People would constantly note that he was "still" doing things; still "interested in politics" when he showed up at a meeting, "still imbibing" when he had a drink and "still that way" when his eyes lit up on seeing a beautiful woman. The Still Syndrome lasted an immodestly long time. Its passage has left America poorer."

In an article he wrote in the Guardian of February 6,1994 JKG made a reference to the present society and observed: "Politically dominant now are the managerial bureaucracy, the public bureaucracy and the lawyers, physicians, educators, the large pensioned and rentier community." A good society, he wrote, must have an effective working economy and it must be at peace with itself and the world at large.

Galbraith in India

As Ambassador of the United States to India Galbraith played a major role in bringing the largest and oldest democracies closer to each other. India remembers him

with gratitude particularly for the support, material and moral, the United States gave during the Sino-Indian war. The President of the United States and his distinguished Ambassador stood by India in that hour of crisis. JKG and his wife Catherine had immense fondness for India and its people. He described India as an “endlessly fascinating country.” He addressed not only intellectual meetings and academic centres but visited almost all parts of India including remote villages. The Galbraiths were hugely popular wherever they went and JKG’s *Ambassador’s Journal—A Personal Account of the Kennedy Years*, a volume of nearly 600 pages, makes delightful reading. The last lines of the book read thus: “ Knowledge is power. But knowledge without character and wisdom is nothing, or worse.” In the beginning of the book he writes: “ Over the years I have established a wonderful reputation for hard work, high productivity or possibly both. It is a fraud.” Catherine was his student at Radcliffe College. He married her in 1937 and she had ever since been his “ general conscience and censor.” Her article *Mother Doesn’t Do Much*, published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in May 1963, was reproduced in *Ambassador’s Journal*. John Kenneth Galbraith is survived by his wife Catherine and their three sons.

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THE MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT (PART VII)

- Prof. M.N. Sastri

Conclusions

The team identified three important messages from the study. 1. Protection of nature’s services is unlikely to be a priority as long as they are perceived to be free and limitless by those using them. 2. Local communities are far more likely to act in ways that conserve natural resources if they have real influence in the decisions on how they are used and if they receive a fairer share of the benefits, and 3. Natural assets will receive far better protection if their importance is recognized by the central decision – making agencies like governments and businesses rather than leaving policies associated with eco services to relatively weak environment departments.

Future policies must aim to satisfy human needs only through exacting a far smaller cost on natural systems. Otherwise they will eventually become incapable of meeting our demands. This strategy has greater relevance to the emerging economies of China, India and Brazil where the natural systems are under great stress. According a recent study by CLSA Asia Pacific Markets, China and India would soon account for 50% of world’s consumption of natural resources, up from 30% now.

In most societies, there is a feeling that a large number of natural services are either free or unrestricted with no consideration for their real cost. One noteworthy example is piped water supply to which many consumers have access at a negligible cost when compared to the actual cost. State subsidies, especially in agriculture, have often directly encouraged degradation of natural systems. Supply of free power, fertilizers and pesticides at subsidized rates are putting unnecessary pressure on land and other natural services. The market value of a forest is often computed in terms of the price of its wood, without taking into consideration its contributions to water control, climate regulation, and other services. When the loss of such natural resources is factored in, a significant number of countries judged to be growing in wealth according to conventional indicators actually became poorer over a time. Policies that take into consideration the true cost of obtaining natural services could lead the consumers and businesses into more efficient behaviour. For example, piped water supplied at true cost will lead to a more careful use of this vital service. Removal of subsidies on fertilizers could encourage the farmer to economize their use and minimize the degradation of land and other natural systems.

The study identified some key steps to reduce the degradation of ecosystem services that involve I) Change in the economic background decision-making; II) Improvements in policy, planning, and management; III) Influencing individual behaviour; and IV) Development and use of environment-friendly technology.

- Make sure the value of all ecosystem services, not just those bought and sold in the market, are taken into account when making decisions
- Remove subsidies to agriculture, fisheries and energy that cause harm to people and the environment
- Introduce payments to landowners in return for managing their lands in ways that protect ecosystem services, such as water quality and carbon storage, that are of value to the society
- Establish market mechanisms to reduce nutrient releases and carbon emissions in the most cost-effective way
- Integrate decision-making between different departments and sectors as well as international institutions to ensure that policies are focused on protection of ecosystems
- Include sound management of ecosystem services in all regional planning decisions and in the poverty reduction strategies being prepared by many developing countries

- Empower marginalized groups to influence decisions affecting ecosystem services, and recognize in law the local communities ownership over natural resources
- Establish additional protected areas, particularly in marine systems and provide greater financial and management support to those that already exist
- Use all relevant forms of knowledge and information about ecosystems in decision-making, including the knowledge of local and indigenous groups
- Provide public education on why and how to reduce consumption of threatened ecosystem services
- Establish reliable certification systems to give people the choice to buy sustainably harvested products
- Give people access to information about ecosystems and decisions affecting their services
- Invest in agricultural science and technology aimed at increasing food production with minimal harmful trade-offs
- Restore degraded ecosystems
- Promote technologies to increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions

The team feels that it lies within the power of the human societies to ease the strains we are putting on the natural services of the planet, while continuing to use them to bring better living standards to all.

The study underscores the message that the life systems of our planet are interrelated and the future or well-being depends upon the well-being of the eco services. Technology enables us to do magical things. But this power should be used doing minimum harm to the eco services. This is possible only through radical echanges in the way Mother Earth is treated at every level of decision-making. The only way this can be achieved is through promoting mass environment literacy that could help arriving at meaningful and democratic decisions. The well known Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson says, “we are about to pass through *the bottleneck*, a period of maximum stress on natural resources and human ingenuity”. George Mussar states (Scientific American, September 2005), “Demographically and economically, our era is unique in human history. Depending on how we manage the next few decades, we could usher in environmental sustainability – or collapse”.

The common theme of all Indian religions is that Mother Earth is sacred and every component – the tree, rock, water and the living thing – has an important role to play and that the human being is only a part and parcel of this divine system. The religious leadership should take initiative to propagate this message among the public and

policy makers and guide them to pursue only developmental programmes aimed at achieving sustainable lifestyles that are not detrimental to ecosystem services.

Note: Supplementary information on ecosystem degradation episodes is included by the author in the summarized Assessment.

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KAHLIL GIBRAN - 'THE PROPHET' A REVIEW

- Sri V. Chiranjeevi, M.A.
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‘The Prophet’ read as a whole is a string of aphorisms and homespun truths. It is the quintessence of life and a love of pragmatic wisdom crystallised. Gibran may be ranked among the great philosophic writers – philosophy in verse. Familiar analogies and images are commissioned to drive home a maxim. His is a far seeing vision and penetrating perception as also simplicity of expression is the hallmark. The rendering in free verse is powerful as it is the outpouring of innate feelings of a man with an uncanny understanding of all the intricacies of life on earth as well as the mysteries of the life beyond and the unbreakable bond between man and his creator. Almost every aspect of human life is touched upon and a convincing truth enunciated.

The utterings of the Prophet appear to be full of seeming contraries and paradoxes; denials and affirmations; negations and confirmations; startling revelations and shocking realities; trite truisms and edifying declarations, for life is like that and the prophet is none other than his Voice issuing the commandments. The illustrations by the author himself speak eloquently of the artist in the poet and vice versa. Thus the illustrations and the verses reinforce each other mutually. However one wonders why the poet has chosen nudes to illustrate the concepts. Is it to suggest ‘naked thou wert born and naked thou shouldst return’?. The final figure on page 129 is highly symbolic. Life is an eddy in which the unenlightened go round and round without direction or destination. The hand in the middle of the whirlpool with an eye inscribed in it may be the assuring hand (‘abhaya hasta’) and the seeing eye of the Lord that guides the destinies of the drifting souls. Gibran’s ‘The Prophet’ should be studied in a prayerful mood as it has deep mystic undertones. Here follows a gist of the prophetic proclamations. The poem is replete with symbolic and allegorical significance.

The wait for the ship and the subsequent voyage at the

beginning symbolise the journey of life. Almustafa's twelve year wait in Orphalese for the ship that was to return and bear him back to the isle of his birth implies the mystic idea that man returns to the place wherefrom he has come. But as he descends his spirit yearns in vain for all the days he has spent among his people. He says,

'It is not a garment I cast off this day, but a skin that I tear with my own hands'. There is a painful realisation that man has to come sooner or later to the end of the tether leaving behind all his kith and kin, breaking all bonds.

The poet's intense religiosity and abundant faith in the Lord are everywhere evident.

'am I a harp that the hand of the Mighty may touch me, or a flute that his breath my pass through me'?. That Almustafa, the prophet is the deputy of the Lord to lead the ignoramus from darkness into light is suggested by the line.

'a noontide have you been in our twilight'. Even the priests and priestesses hail him as their guiding spirit. 'You have walked among us a spirit and your shadow has been a light upon our faces'.

Almitra is a seeress. She alone seems to understand the purpose of the Prophet. She beseeches him.

'Speak to us and give us of your truth. We will give it to our children and it shall not perish'.

The homily on 'love' is at once convincing and edifying.

'Even as love crowns so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning'. Also, 'Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself'. Here 'love' is personified. 'Love' is such a potent phenomenon that to attain it one has to go through the grueling grind.

About 'marriage', the Prophet says,

'Love one another, but make not a bond of love' or again, 'Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone'.

This concept of marriage seems to propound duality in unity and kind of detached attachment, whereas our Hindu concept is that marriage is not merely a union of bodies, but also of souls i.e. husband and wife are one.

Regarding 'Children' the Prophet observes philosophically thus,

'Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself and though they are with you they belong not to you'. Further he observes,

'You may house their bodies but not their souls'.

The Prophet renders another memorable homily on 'Work'. To be idle i.e. not doing any work is to become a stranger on the very planet he lives and is out of step with the grand and majestic pageant of life. To work is to love life. Work is inspired by love that really binds one to God.

So work is love made visible.

'Freedom', according to the Prophet is not an end in itself, for even the desire of seeking freedom becomes a harness. True freedom is not liquidating the external bonds like care, laws, fear etc.,

'A little while, a moment of rest upon the wind and another woman shall bear me'.

Thus the cycle of life and death is complete and it goes on for ever.

***"Punarapi Jananam Punarapi Maranam
Punarapi Jananee Jattare Sayanam
Eha Samsare Bahudusthare
Krupa Ya Pare Paahi Muraare"***

Om Santhi ! Santhi !! Santhi !!

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MIND IN MUSIC

- Dr. T.V. Sairam
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"An expert musicologist may not understand what he hears, despite his skilled descriptions. The decisive fact is the experience itself." – R. Scruton

In Sanskrit, mind is known as *manas*. It is often compared to the ocean, thanks to its spread and depth. As the mind gets wafted by the winds of desires, it undergoes modifications (*vrittis*). These modifications, or the modal consciousness do impart certain knowledge and experience. The Indian Vedanta philosophy advocates the need of cultivating a tranquil, and balanced state of mind – (*antahkarana*). For Vedanta, when *antahkarana* is tinged with different objects, it adopts their forms. Thus, a lilt in a rhythm or in a melody, through synchronization either sharpens one's alert state or imparts relaxation.

The Indian philosophy identifies the desires and passions as the causes of disturbance of the mind. They disturb the balance (or the state of equilibrium) of the mind-substance and create sorrows and sufferings in life. The practice of Yoga however is believed to control the mind as it causes the mind to be concentrated upon certain desired thing or objects. It prepares the ground for

meditation as well as of the super-conscious state in which the individual finds his or her everlasting peace.

‘Every outward manifestation in music’, says Swami Prajnanands, ‘is caused by the mind or will-power’. For Arthur Schoppenhauer, Music is not only copy of one’s ideas, but also a copy of Will.

The power of Music:

Though sound, *per se*, does not owe an explanation to anyone, it is the human mind that is chronically engaged in the search of its sense or purpose.

A musical composition usually reflects an expression of a thought conceived in the composer’s mind. Here, the composer communicates his resolutions – and not reasons. His expression may be down-to-earth (eg., folk music) or sophisticated (as in eg., classical and orchestrated music). It may or may not motivate the listener to listen.

Western symphonies have revolutionized our sound perception. By bringing together numerous instruments of varying timbre and making them play almost simultaneously, the sound, like wine, is blended and presented before a connoisseur! This distinct style of communication is the greatest contribution to the world of music by the West. Marches, war-torn landscapes, day-breaks, firework displays, pastoral beauties, tender, romantic feelings – all find their niche in the *chef d’oeuvres* of great masters like Bach, Beethoven, Bizet, Brahms, Chopin, Debussy, De Falla, Greig, Handel, Liadov, Mendelsohn, Mozart, Saint-Saens, Strauss, Tchaikovsky, Vivaldi, Wagner and a host of others. How can we forget the magic of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony in C Minor, unearthing our own internal conflicts, while helping us – at the same time – to resolve them through its passage? And Tchaikovsky’s scene from the *Swan Lake* that makes us jump out of our bed to remain in tune with its movements? And Vivaldi’s depiction of summer in the *Four Seasons* that trigger the fireballs of anger and heat from the violas and violins? And Strauss’ *Blue Danube* that flows with a calm majesty of its own? And *Greig’s Peer Gynt Suite* that ushers in the beauty of yet another glorious morning before us along with hopes and optimism?

Music that Triggers the Psychic Process :

Lehtonen (1986) had referred to musical experience as one of the best ways of activating the psychic processes. The ancient systems such as shamanism, Nada Yoga and chanting, focused on emanation of vibrations from sounds and long remained as the mainstay in binding the mind and behaviour of people and worked towards preservation

of tribal societies. Certain frequencies of notes have been found to contribute towards such a healing state by the researchers. The music relationship called the major sixth in which the frequencies of the notes are in the ration of 8 : 5, is widely believed to have a powerful healing trait.

The major sixth ration also reflects a fascinating range of number (Fibonacci sequence) wherein each number in the sequence is the sum total of the two preceding numbers as in 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21 and so on. This sequence is found to be of great significance in nature – apparently in unrelated spheres from geometry and genetics – as revealed in the natural growth pattern in plants, snail shells etc.

Music and Mind : The self-organizing and Pattern-making systems:

Edward de Bono opines that mind is a self-organizing system. The concept that the mind is a pattern making system as it creates patterns out of the environment and then recognizes and uses such patterns goes in tune with the basic characteristics of music. Music too creates definite and perceivable patterns out of the environment by manipulating sound and silence. It has been demonstrated recently that or mind could amplify the quality of energy contained in a sound wave and cheer up the spirits.

Music like mind is both analytical and intuitive: the Western classical school has elaborate system of ‘analytical’ melodies in their polyphonies and counterpoints, combined with ‘intuitive’ or ‘emotional’ beats which falter at every turn! In contrast, the *Indian raga* music is conceived of ‘intuitive’ or ‘emotional’ melodies (ragas), coupled with highly precise, calculative *talas*. The intuitive, emotional and creative functioning is assigned to right-hemisphere of the brain, whereas the left hemisphere’s functions are analysis and calculations. In a recent study (Foster, 1990), it has been reported that wave activities in the two hemispheres of our brain (left representing our analytical ability and the right, emotion) are balanced by music. This would mean that the Indian musicologists have mastered the technique of balancing the mind, long before neurologists could even find about it!

Quality of Notes:

In music, the low-pitched notes are generally associated with heavier feelings and hence regarded as intuitive and spiritual. We find them extensively exploited in religious chants and *mantras*. They are felt to be leading to the depths of one’s existence and towards introversion that lends certain serenity amidst the tension chaos, one may be surrounded in. on the contrary, the high-pitch is associated with the alert tensed mind, which is rational and to an extent, extrovert, as represented by beta brain

wave patterns. High frequencies (around 8000 Hz) employed by the Austrian musical prodigy Mozart in his sonatas and concertos have been endorsed by the modern scientists for their beneficial state of mind, called 'relaxed alertness'. A dose of such music is considered 'positively activating' just before undertaking strenuous work, such as examination, sports, facing an interview, meeting challenging situations in life etc.

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SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY - I

By SriM. NARASIMHAPPA,IRS

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Lecture delivered on 20-05-06
at Centre for Policy Studies
(Gayatri Vidhya Parishad)

I am neither a Scientist nor a Vedanthin to give a scholarly lecture. I must admit that I am a sincere student of spirituality and I have been trying to understand the subject in a scientific manner. I have been exploring this subject since my 21st year.

Science:

We all know the definition of 'Science', the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment. It is also defined as an organized body of knowledge on any subject. The adjective Scientific means relating to or based on science. It also means systematic, methodical, analytical, meticulous, orderly, organized, precise, rational, regulated, rigorous etc.

Spiritualism:

On the other hand 'Spiritual' is defined as having to do with religion or religious belief. It is also defined as having to do with human spirit as opposed to physical things, spirit has also been defined as breath, mind, syche, sole, apparition, demon, devil, ghost, essence, feeling, heart.

Spirit as a noun, has been defined as the part of a person that consists of a character and feelings rather than their body, often believed to survive after their body is dead. It is also used to mean super natural being.

I restrict myself to spirituality to mean essence of religions, belief system, broadly the world beyond i.e. non-physical world.

Science X Spirituality:

Generally, science and spiritualism are presumed to be

antagonistic, opposed to each other. They do not meet on a common platform. While science enables you to know any subject analytically, rationally and allows you to carry experiments, Religion is all beliefs, prophets, sages, priests, theology, speculations about existence of God as a divine father or mother, right and wrong, morality and immorality, dos and don'ts, reward and punishments, putting you in heaven or hell depending upon the judgment after death, creation and destruction of the world etc. As the subject is so vast, you would agree with me that it will not be possible to cover in depth all the topics. In a limited time available to us I would like to share my explorations of this topic.

I hope it would help some of you also as we all belong to modern age, which is a scientific age where everything is subjected to scrutiny of science, rationality and verification etc.

Childhood Questions:

Like many young children, at the age of nine, I was bugged by the existence of God, who is supposed to have created this world and also rules it as not even an ant, leaf, moves without His order. He is said to be all powerful, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient. What disturbed me was If He is all powerful and all knowing why did He create differences in the world in terms of rich and poor, beauty and ugliness, healthy and unhealthy, fair and dark? The God appears to be partial unjust, arbitrary, despotic and someone to be feared but not to be loved. Unfortunately, in my village in Anantapur district, I didn't have chance of talking to somebody about these matters.

Who is God - ultimate?

As I grew up I read a little Ramayana, Mahabharatha, while I was impressed by the miraculous powers of God, several questions cropped up, who is the ultimate God? Is it Vishnu? Shiva? Brahma?, Mahakali? In Hinduism we have hundreds and thousands of Gods and Goddess. What about God worshipped by Jews, Christians, Muslims, Parsies. What about Buddhists, Jains, Taoists, Confucians who don't speak of God. Are they outside jurisdiction of God?

Religion – Creation of Clergy:

Does really God exists which most of the religions talk about? No definite answer for me. The whole thing looked to be confusing, baffling and bewildering. Every religion nay, every religious sect Shaivites, Vaishnavites, Mother Goddess worshippers, Jews, believes and proclaims that their God/Goddess is supreme. With all these confusions, I thought religion is a creation of clever clergy be it pujaris

of Hinduism, Mullahs of Islam, Fathers of Christianity, to encash the ignorance of common man who is exploited for selfish ends of the priestly class. In ancient times ignorant man could not understand the phenomena of nature, birth, death, diseases, rains, thunder, floods, droughts, pestilence. God was brought in to explain the natural calamities and find a way out i.e. protect and save ourselves from problems, if God could be pleased through rituals, offerings sometimes even heads. Priests took the role of mediation between the God and devotees.

All bunkum, crap; so I stopped visiting temples. I became agnostic. Let us forget God and concentrate upon the work on hand.

(To be continued)

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INDIA-A GLOBAL ECONOMIC POWER-III

-Prof. M. Jagadeswara Rao

Retd. Prof and Head of the Dept. of Economics (A.U.)

So far our major trading partner has been the USA, other countries and regions, which have been ignored so far by the policy makers need to be identified and included in the policy similarly Assean is an important trading bloc for India's future plans.

d) It is in this context, the 'Look East Policy' initiated during the regime of late P.V. Narasimha Rao should be vigorously pursued. Enlarging trade with this bloc – ASSEAN – will be consistent with India's interests. India must enter into bilateral trade agreements with ASEAN countries. Towards this end India's policy must be evolved in the light of what happened at the First East Asian Summit recently. The determined opposition from Malaysia and China sidelined India especially in the case of leadership of the proposed Asian Free, Trade Zone. China wants to head the proposed zone; Countries like Indonesia and Singapore, wary of the Chinese intentions, wanted India to be balancer in the proposed arrangement. India's tardy diplomacy and its reluctance to open up its economy contributed to this.

The Prime Minister, addressing the East Asian Summit, promised to bring down India's tariffs to ASEAN levels. But contrary to this, India's initial proposal for a free trade agreement with ASEAN sought to exclude about 1400 items from any tariff cuts. This created a suspicion among the ASEAN countries that India is still not ready to move at ASEAN pace. These lacunae need to be corrected if the 'Look East' dream were to become a reality and India were to play a leading role in Asian affairs.

e) All this underscores the need for India to formulate its economic policy and implement it, recognising the changes

in the global economy and the geopolitical realities, India which is on the way of becoming an emerging global power, needs a rethinking on its position and the likely role it has to play in the evolving global system that has replaced bipolarity.

International economic diplomacy is important. India's international economic policy and its economic diplomacy should be coherent, coordinated and consistent. India should have a clear idea of its global economic interests and its international economic objectives.

The position that India takes on the WTO should be consistent with the position that it takes in the bora like IMF or, World Bank or UNCTAD. India played its role effectively at the recent Hongkong meeting of the WTO championing the cause of the developing world and was instrumental in forcing an agreement along with China and Brazil. The coming together of G – 20 and G – 90 (the developing world) is the result of its crucial intermediary role (in cooperation with China and Brazil). This must be continued and greater clarity on India's goals is needed.

These are but a few that merit attention if India were to live up to the expectations of the rest of the world. India has to build on its strengths, recognise its weaknesses and remove them. Poverty and low human development (127th position in a comity of 177 Countries) are matters of concern domestically. But these should not distract India from preparing for its global role. They could be tackled by proper social sector policies. India has the essential endowments and competencies that are needed for building a successful global economic power. The road ahead is bumpy and challenging. But India has a task cut out for itself. A carefully planned and calibrated external economic policy and domestic policies will determine the way and the pace at which India will move to the top. India has a chance to become an important player in the global economy and can play a key role provided it tries to put its act together.

(Concluded)

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Congratulations to Gayatri Vidya Parishad

INDO-GERMAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IGIAT)

Dr. Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, unveiled the foundation stone of the Indo – German Institute of Advanced Technology (IGIAT), a joint project of Andhra Pradesh Government, German Government and Gayatri Vidya Parishad, on May 20, 2006 at IGIAT campus in Kancharapalem, Visakhapatnam. The prestigious joint venture would help

engineering graduates and technical students in getting employment opportunities. The Chief Minister complimented Gayatri Vidya Parishad for taking the initiative in the venture and for investing huge amount in it. The state Government allotted five acres of land in the industrial estate of the city while the German Government advanced Rs 16 crores for the institute's infrastructural facilities. Mr. G. Kumaraswamy Reddy, IAS (Retd) President, Society for IGIAT, explained how the venture would help in bridging the gap between the technical institutes and industry besides increasing employment opportunities for students. Mr. D.J. Hahn the Programme Director of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Dr. B. Swami, President of Gayatri Vidya Parishad, Prof. P. Somaraju, Secretary of the Parishad and Director of IGIAT Prof. P.S. Rao participated in the function.

* * *

UGC clearance for the establishment of Centre for the Studies in Gandhian Philosophy and Human Development.

Gayatri Vidya Parishad will launch a Centre for the Studies in Gandhian Philosophy and Human Development, following approval and sanction of funds by the University Grants Commission.

The Centre is proposed to be located at Rushikonda Campus. Staff and students of G.V. P. Institutions – Centre for Policy Studies, G.V.P. Junior College, G.V.P. College for Degree and P.G. Courses, G.V.P. College of Engineering are to be involved to promote value based education at all levels. The objective is to build a better future for the young generation and to contribute to national development through a) studies at the micro and macro levels on the relevance and impact of Gandhian Philosophy in the making of public policy and b) studies on Human Development and mobilization of Human Resources for national development. The Centre also aims to focus on such sensitive issues as gender justice, empowerment of the disadvantaged sections and environmental care.

Gayatri Vidya Parishad feels that it is essential to create a platform for spreading awareness of Gandhian philosophy among the present and future generations and create a renewed interest in accepting the Mahatma's philosophy as a way of life to enrich our society.

* * *

EXAMINATIONS (The Fear and the Fare)

- Prof. U. Murali Krishna
(A.U. Retd)

A consistent recommendation by different committees

on education is examination reforms. The reason that it has been the most important recommendation lies probably on the point that examination is not recognized as an aspect of the learning process. The teaching, learning and examination constitute a unity of functions. Further, earlier at no stage examinations were viewed from the student's capability angle. A survey made some time back by the AP State Commission of Higher Education with regard to EAMCET pattern is a measure towards comprehensive data collection from experts, students, parents; thus taking a wider sample for better optimal conclusion.

Purpose of examination :

Remember that examination should serve many purposes, some of which are:

- (i) Evaluation of the student's abilities and capabilities. The abilities and capabilities of the student may be many, for example, memory power, reasoning power, critical thinking power, innovative power, to name a few
- (ii) Examination should be a focal point for the student in his review of the subject matter at frequent intervals.
- (iii) Examination should be a teaching device to aid and direct the student in his reasoning power.
- (iv) Examination is a measure to check the thoroughness of the student's knowledge base. This may be by way of home assignments, student's attitudinal characteristics to problem solving either at home or in the class room, (problems need not necessarily be numerical).

Impact :

But, look at how the learners feel about the examinations. A 5th standard pupil of a school wrote a poem in his school magazine thus: "they are never so dear, because they cause a lot of fear, in my mind they cause tensions and a lot of friction". This frailty is being conveniently exploited by some traders who advertise in the print and electronic media as "tips to relieve stress in examination and recipes to improve the mind power", so on and so forth. All these are in general marketing tips to improve their business products. Further, students sometimes go all out for postponement of examinations to a later date when once they are announced.

It is quite obvious that examinations are not stress free, nor are they taken by way of casual culmination of reading, understanding and application of what is learnt. It may be of interest to know the disposition of the learners of knowledge in the Vedic age, as quoted in the hymns. The seeker of knowledge asks the Guru, "Tell us when we have

to take the test for the lessons we learnt” {Rig Veda-RG87/29/3-4; reference: ‘Vedic Knowledge’ by R.P. Singh, University News, 44(05) Jan-Feb, (2006)}.

Present day Characteristics :

What are the characteristics of the present day examinations? It may please be noted that this write up is based on that which we generally observe in State funded schools, colleges and universities. The examinations like GRE, CAT, GATE, and of those institutions of world standard ranking are out of this purview.

- (i) Conducting the examinations after a gap, usually one year.
- (ii) Stereotyped essay type questions.
- (iii) Choice based questions.
- (iv) High subjectivity at the paper setter level, students level and paper evaluator level.
- (v) Considerable mental strain to students.
- (vi) Misclassification and grading anomalies due to the totaling of raw marks in different subjects.

These being the characteristics with regard to examinations, time and again reforms in the pattern are sought to minimize the drawbacks and maximize the benefits.

Recommendations of the Committees :

Some of the more important recommendations of the committees that have gone into this aspect are as follows:

- (a) Instructional and learning objectives at each level of study must be clearly laid down.
- (b) The content and the clarity of the curricular topic of the examination should be such as to reveal the competence of the student and encourage the student in independent thinking. It should aid the student by defining not only the minimum requirements but also the full possibilities in the learning. For example, the American way of indicating the grade requirements for completing a unit of the course by incorporating in the syllabus or course content paper.
- (c) Evaluation procedures must be varied. They should include different techniques so that they are less likely to be artificial and more naturally related to the learning process such that they are helpful to students in organizing their thoughts, form a basis for self-assessment of progress and be a guide to improvement of work habits. Under such conditions the anxiety

and stress attached to examinations can be markedly reduced.

- (d) Final marking should be based on 100% internal assessment by teachers concerned, with strict proper checks and controls provided and adopted. (Of course, adequate safety to teachers also should be a prime concern). Or the final marking can be by both the internal and external assessments. Whatever be the type, strict measures are necessary to eliminate malpractice. Adequate built in checks should be provided to eliminate bias.
- (e) A gradual incremental improvement on the part of students from the strict curricular content in to be aimed at in the design of examinations to promote skill in understanding, develop professional scholarship in execution and enhance research thinking in design.

UGC’s Suggestions for a Plan of action :

Following the recommendations of the committees the University Grants Commission outlined some points for a plan of action. They are :

- (1) Coursewise assessment
- (2) Grading instead of marks
- (3) Continuous assessment measures of a number of essential abilities to be shown in the grade sheet
- (4) Coursewise question bank development and continuous upgradation of the question bank.
- (5) Provision for student’s scrutiny of the assessment made by the teacher and the evaluator. This part may become redundant if there is a provision made for the student to justify his answer in the script.

Conclusion :

Considering the dynamics and ramifications associated with the system called examination no simple and single approach will ever be perfect, especially in a set up devoid of dedication and commitment. An examination index factor analogous to environmental impact factor may have to be worked out taking into account the effect of all the relevant points considered to contribute to the purpose of the examination. Stress diminishing factor and knowledge base enhancement trait should form the important input components of this factor. An appropriate method can then be easily designed to attain the optimal probability of acceptance.

* * *

SRI SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA-III

(Dec 15th 1908 – April 25th 2005)

- Sri Challa Sivasankaram

He brought to the notice of the Government of Andhra Pradesh the urgent need of a site for the Ashram for which he said that he would send his monks armed with formal application and plans. The responsible government under Sri Late Jalagam Vengala Rao the ablest of the Chief Ministers of Andhra soon informed the Swami that the government would send its concerned person to the Swami and the Swami need not send anybody with regard to this matter. Sri Late Vengalarao carried out his word, Plans were approved and the required site was alienated in favour of the Ashram. On a later occasion the Government under TDP maintained the same decorum and reverence to the Ashram under the Swami. The bonafides of the Ashram were cent percent above-board. Such was the majesty and magic of the Swami who could move the mountain of Government where prophet Mohammed miserably failed (the tale is that the prophet said that he would bring the mountain to him without his going to the mountain. The mountain didn't come to the prophet and he went to the mountain)

The Swami was encyclopaedic in learning like Aristotle and the Master saint of the order of the Paramacharya of Kanchi Kamakoti peetham who was conversant with 17 world languages besides proficiency in the major religions of the world. The paramacharya took "Ashrama" in his thirteenth year and sojourned on the earth from May 2nd 1894 - August 1st 1994. He belonged to the sister state of Tamil Nadu. He may be reckoned as the last of the kind.

The wit and repartee and the skill in dealing with ease any situation did not blunt with growing age. It was wit not sarcasm or derision. They ripened and sharpened along

with age. The head of the Swami was perfectly charged with the quintessence of primeval, mediaeval and modern philosophies and sciences. He had admiration for Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who was older by twenty years to the Swami. Swami Ranganathananda's works are many and multifaceted. Adi Sankaracharya and Chinmayananda were the ineffable gifts of Kerala. The constitution of the intellect of Swami bears the mark of a high degree of wisdom with which the fabled two above said seers were endowed. He joined the monastic order as a cook. Then he cooked food for the inmates of the Ashram, again did cooking food all the way from Range on to Dhaka in the great exodus of men and women and a few days old babies in 1942. He patiently cooked food to fill the bellies of men, women and children and along with it he wrote works for feeding the minds hungering for philosophy that would make them look cultured, and civilized and universal in deed and thought.

Probably the Swami was the only monk of the Order who enjoyed monastic life span of a thousand full-moons, Full of laurels, wisdom, complete calm, constant control on the twelve indriyas the Swami merged in Akhandatma attained Mahasamadhi at 3.51 p.m. on April 25th 2005. Till the end he was alert. His last words were, "Lift me up, I want to sit up, lift me up. Unless one is acquainted with sciences one cannot be a thorough philosopher for it is also a science and by the learned it was termed as the science of sciences. Philosophy rescues science when it is caught in the whirlpool of dilemma. Philosophy does not mean spirituality. It is the mouth of spirit and matter to speak together in one Universal tongue. As long as we see the temporal as temporal and spiritual as spiritual leading a disparate existence we will have no salvation. It is supreme wisdom to look upon the two as the two sides of the selfsame coin. Harmony is in union and not in division.

(Concluded)

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