

Towards Indian Vision of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

- Dr. G.P. Rao

This article pertains to 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' – the world is one family.

It is based on a study entitled, Management, Human Values and Sustainable Development: Towards Indian vision of vasudhaiva kutumbakam (The world is one family). The study was conducted as an attempt at identifying human values suitable for strengthening sustainable development and fostering the spirit that the world is one family.

I: The context and the issue

I, for one, believe that it is the most obvious which we miss most. One such instance is how great we, the human beings, are and yet how small; how strong, and yet so weak; and, so lucky, and yet so unlucky! The human beings are endowed with several noble qualities to be noble souls in terms of their being useful to self, others and the environment at large. But seldom does it happen. We know how great we are, but not willing to act upon accordingly. Even if willing, we are not able to be successful. On the top of it, many a time we may not be aware of our noble qualities within us; even if we are aware, we may not have strong enough belief in our greatness within us.

Most of the faiths and belief systems postulate that human being cannot be painted as completely white or as completely black. The human nature is essentially grey – an admixture of good and bad, although it is very difficult to define what is good and what is bad. This phenomenon of admixture of goodness and otherwise I tried to depict in terms of innate divinity, basic goodness and intrinsic altruism. Each of the three characteristics, namely divinity, goodness and altruism, as can be noted, are not stated simply – 'not available on platter' - as such. Each characteristic is preceded by an adjective: Innate divinity, Basic goodness; and Intrinsic altruism. This means that one cannot expect divinity, goodness and altruism to be manifested in the sayings and doings of human beings as a general pattern. We have, in other words, to put in effort to know what we are, what we can do and how we can do. As Galileo Galilee, the great scientist and discoverer of telescope, put it rather wryly, "I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason and intellect has intended us to forget them."

The effort to put in is three fold: to become aware that these characteristics are within us: to believe that these characteristics have potential to be effective; and, to act upon and adhere to these characteristics through suitable sayings and doings for the good of self and others. These three A's, Awareness, Acceptance and Adherence, thus constitute the pivot of the human interface with each other and the environment, accompanied by the consequent positive results or otherwise.

The 'trigger', so to say, for the above feelings and for this research work is the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and Sustainable Development, arrived at in Paris on December 12 2015.

II: The study: Its objectives and data.

The study entitled, Management, Human Values and Sustainable Development: Towards Indian vision of vasuadhaiva kutumbakam (The world is one family), was an attempt at identifying human values suitable for strengthening sustainable development and fostering the spirit that the world is one family. The human values chosen as inventory for such identification represented three perspectives: Spandan Spectrum of Human Values (SSHV) 2013; Sustainability Values; and, Family as an economic organization and Business Values. Three response sheets were designed relating to the three respective perspectives.

Professionals, entrepreneurs, academia, social service organizations and others interested and involved in the sphere of sustainable development at individual and institutional levels had been invited to be respondent in the study. Twenty responded to the invitation whose professional profile is as follows:

- Academia : 6
- Consultants : 3
- Entrepreneurs : 6
- Professionals : 5

Four of the above 20 respondents were based abroad.

The responses received from the three perspectives, referred to, were prepared as three base tables.

The data available for the period 1996, when Sir Ratan Tata Visiting Fellowship study was undertaken, till the end of 2015, when the field work of the present study was commenced, were collated and developed as Spandan Spectrum of Human Values Index (SSHV-I). The relevant data from the SSHV Index were used as fourth base table. The responses from these four base tables were collated and presented as the final and fifth base table.

Salient Findings

The fifth base table contained a total of 25 human values figuring in the three perspectives, ie: three base tables, viz. SSHV – Base Table I; Sustainability Values – Base Table II; and Family – Business Values – Base Table III.

Of the above 25 human values, Faith in basic goodness in human beings and Shared Vision figured in all the three perspectives, as also among the top ten of the values to be strengthened in Indian industry as reflected in the Spandan Spectrum of Human Values (SSHV) Index (Base Table IV) Since, however, Faith in basic goodness in human beings (No.1) also stood first in SSHV Index (4+1), it has been placed at the top, followed by Shared Vision (No. 13) at the second position (4). This means that adherence of these two values is perceived as most conducive for sustainable development and for nurturing the spirit of vasudhaiva kutumbakam (The world is one family). Trust is a value associated with Family – Business values (Perspective III / Base Table II), which is a manifestation of the value, Faith in Basic Goodness in Human beings. Shared responsibility is a Sustainability value, and Long term perspective is a Family – Business Value, both of which are manifestations of Shared Vision.

Base Table V, further, reveals that Respect for Nature and Mother Earth stands at the third position with tally points and standing first as the Sustainability value (3+1). Respect for nature, also, happens to be a specific sustainability value (No.6), apart from Respect for Nature and Mother Earth, being a transformational human value (No.4) from Spandan Spectrum of Human Values. Adherence of transformational human values, like also Faith in basic goodness of human beings, is postulated as important for transformation at individual and institutional levels independent of time, place and occasion.

Let us take a pause and try to understand the messages emanated so far in the context of human values suitable for sustainable development and the mindset that the world is one family.

Human behaviour is postulated as a function of self and the situation within which the self operates. This implies that whether the given human endeavour results in success or otherwise is to be seen the individual (self), her personality, perceptions and attitudes and the environment, the milieu, within which the individual functions, and its favourableness or otherwise towards the individual's efforts at achieving the given objective(s). Viewed from this perspective, Faith in basic goodness in human beings refers to the self, self image and one's belief systems. Respect for Nature and Mother Earth, on the other hand, relates to the self's perception of the environment and the manner in which the human being attempts at relating to the environment while working towards the given goal(s). Shared vision, as a value common in all the three perspectives, viz. Spandan Spectrum of human values, Sustainability values and Family – Business values, and its adherence at individual and institutional levels indicates the pathway towards the Indian vision of vasudhaiva kutumbakam (The world is one family). Consciousness at cosmic level that the universe is one entity,

then becomes worthwhile odyssey for us, the human beings, to remake ourselves as humane beings. Consistent and concerted efforts need to be undertaken at individual and institutional levels to propagate and inculcate values like Faith in basic goodness in human beings and Respect for nature and Mother Earth through Awareness, Acceptance and Action / Adherence.

For the management at organizational level, the implication is to identify, propagate and inculcate suitable human values, as referred to, as integral to work ethic and strategic management and the organization's interface with the society.

The odyssey is never ending, ever challenging, highly excruciating - but self fulfilling, at the end of the day, as the saying goes.