

'Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam' – The Whole Earth is Our Family

By Arvind Bhargava

अयं नजिः परैवेति गणना लघुवेत्साम्।
उदारवर्तितानां तु बहुषु वै कुटुम्बकमा।

The concept of universal brotherhood was deeply understood and mentioned thousands of years before in Holy Scriptures of Vedic Sanatan Dharma. The meaning of this complete shloka is that – Only small minds think that this is our own and that is someone else. For large hearted people the whole earth is our own family. Hindus believe in this thought process to the core as mentioned in above Sanskrit Shloka.

This concept is also engraved in the entry Room of Parliament of India. It clearly shows that how much the big-

gest democracy in the world values and practice this thought.

We don't see this kind of mindset in the world anywhere. There is lot of bloodshed in the name of religion and in the name of occupying other country. If we look at world history, Bharat (India) has never attacked any country or never entered in the war to spread the Hindu Religion in its thousand year old civilization. We have always been a land of acceptance.

We have always allowed all the religious ways to grow on our land, as we strongly believe in humanity first. All the religions have cherished in India despite more than 80% population believes in Hindu/Vedic way of life. We have always been interested in

knowing new cultures, new spiritual ways of knowing the Almighty, new science etc. That's the reason behind of accommodating all people irrespective of caste, colour, and even religion and nationality. This has been possible only due to this belief that "the whole earth is our family." Historically, this concept has been mentioned, accepted and developed further quoted in many places like Panchtantra, Chankyaya and other stories. The ancient NEETI have treated the aphorism of Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam.

First composed, probably during Raja Bhoj empire in 11th Century CE or more likely the collection of 32 stories became so popular that these were transmitted as early as 1305 CE,

to even far away Mongolia and then to Russia & Germany. To our surprise, Raja Bhoj known as "Arji Bhuj" is Hero in Mongolian Folk Lore and in German old tales. Further, there are at least six Recensions found in southern manuscripts of Vikram Chaitra, found in Andhra.

In the Jain recension, the shloka of Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam appears in an intriguing tale known as Paropakaraya svadehatudana, recited by Suprabha who is here the seventeenth statuette.

The shloka of "Vasudhaiva kutumbkam", a slightly different variant of it, is to be found in this Mahopashada as the seventy-second shloka of its sixth chapter. Here instead of 'ayamjiah paroveti', the shloka reads

as 'aya mbandhaturaya neti' (this is a friend and that one not), while the rest of the *anustubha* remains the same.

अयं बन्धुरव्यं नेति गणना लघुवेत्साम्।
उदारवर्तितानां तु बहुषु वै कुटुम्बकम्
(महापरमपिद् ६, ७०-७३)

It's the beauty of Sanatan Dharma that the concepts are eternal and have relevance across cultures and generations. Today's modern world is talking so much about human values and brotherhood. Lots of NGOs are developing concepts and attitudes towards this value system. What a proud literature, saints and culture we have!

(The writer is a Management Professional and Social Speaker)

Sanatan Hindu Dharma Celebrates, Gives Purpose to Life

By Azad K Kaushik

The celebration of Hindu Heritage month should be the time to reflect for Hindus to think about the purpose of their life and their success in achieving the goals, especially imbuing 'sanskars' in the next generation so that they could live a purposeful life. Humans, without exception, tend to seek the meaning of the mysterious universe and to understand the very purpose of life. For Hindus practicing Sanatan Dharma, this is viewed through the multi-faceted concept of God (Ishvara), universe (Jagat) and soul (Atman). The vast Vedic scriptures encompass all aspects of life, including God, nature and cosmos, and guide a seeker in all space and for all the time. For Hindus, God is Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss. He is 'Nirguna', free of all qualifications and limitations. The God is Brahman, All-inclusive, All-expansive, Omnipresent and Omnipotent. The genderless 'Om' is His name. The 'Kathopanishad' enlightens mankind about 'Atman' that resides in the living beings. One can only marvel at the relationship between a soul and the divine spirit (Savasyopanshad) where distinction between self and non-self disappears. The Yajurveda describes the nature of soul as, "Soul or 'Atman' is immortal, but this body will be reduced to ashes. O man, doer of actions, meditate and Universal Soul, the protector of all, remember your deeds, remember your deeds!"

The spiritual knowledge (Jnana) is that by which one merges into the Atman (soul) just as a river merges into an ocean. Indeed, Vijnana, knowledge of science and arts is rooted as a manifestation of Jnana that can be experienced by a serious scholar through attainment of the ultimate goal of the spiritual knowledge (Jnana). The Yoga through body, mind and soul connects art, music and dance to the spiritual experiences of a Hindu. The relationship between spiritual and scientific principles can be sensed through sounds of conch shells and musical instruments, apart from nature such as flowers and flow of water. The Vedic scriptures deal with the Hindu philosophy that provide a seeker, through spiritual practices, advanced intellectual means of reasoning and analysis for construction and synthesis of the knowledge. Ultimately, it is the inner experience and self-realization that brings peace and spiritual bliss to an individual. To achieve the objectives of life, four ashramas (stages of life) are described. 1. Education is emphasized in the early years of life (Brahmcharya); 2. Satisfaction of rightful desires as a householder (Artha and Kama) in adulthood (Grahstha-Ashrama); 3. Contemplation during senior years (Vanaprastha-Ashrama); and 4. Renunciation during last stage of the life to unite with the Supreme Being through Yoga (Sanyaasa-Ashram). A journey through these stages of life is enriching that permits blissful living.

In Sanatan Hindu Dharma, "OM" or "AUM" is all encompassing and all pervading sacred symbol that represents infinite and indefinable Nirguna Brahman. According to Mandukya Upanishad:

"In Yoga, soul is the seeker and God the Ultimate Reality it finds within.

While dwelling in the manifold phenomena of the universe, the soul must take care of the material body, purifying and perfecting it under the most rigorous and scientific system of training. The soul must practice the highest principles of behaviour, Yama, Niyama, and the four Right attitudes to keep the mind pure. Through these purifications and concentrations, one removes the blocks of the mind so the Divine Grace may flow freely.

Essentially, the Vedic scriptures of Sanatan (Eternal) Dharma provide multi-faceted manifestations of knowledge emanating from the Supreme Being. This vast knowledge and wisdom of the Vedic scriptures guides human beings through four fold objectives (Purusarthas) for living a life. The fulfillment of these objectives, Dharma (knowledge and application of the life-principles), Artha (money and means), Kama (rightful desires) and Moksha (spiritual bliss and freedom from all kind of desires), gives a meaning and purpose to life. Thus, spiritual enlightenment is the ultimate goal of life leading to ultimate joy (Ananda) and liberation (Mukti). A Hindu is expected to perform sixteen Sanskars, rites of passage from birth to death, at various stages in the journey of life: Garbhidana, Pumsavana, Scentantomyama, jatikarma, Namakarana, Niskramana, Annaprashana, Chooda Karma, Karanvedha, Upanayana, Vedarambha, samavartan, Vivah, vanprastha, Sanyas and Antyeshthi.

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an ocean. Indeed, Vijnana, knowledge of science and arts is rooted as a manifestation of Jnana that can be experienced by a serious scholar through attainment of the ultimate goal of the spiritual knowledge (Jnana).

"OM or AUM – the eternal Word is all: What was, What is and what shall be, and what beyond is in eternity. All is OM. Brahman is all and 'Atman' is Brahman. This 'Atman' is the eternal word OM comprising four states Of consciousness." Three syllables, A-U-M represent the following three states: A - waking consciousness, common to all man U - dreaming consciousness, attains equilibrium M - sleeping consciousness, attains final end/Collectively, OM represents the supreme consciousness, beyond senses and end of evolution Every Hindu home has a designated small place or temple of worship where morning and evening prayers (Sandhya) are performed by the members of a family. The chanting of Mantras forms an important aspect of worship among Hindus practicing Sanatan Dharma. A phrase or word that can lead one to the highest Goal through reflection is called a 'Mantra'. The mystic Gayatri Mantra is an ancient divine hymn chanted by millions of Hindus everyday. The Gayatri Mantra may be translated as - We devoutly meditate on "Om" to that praiseworthy enlightening aroma of the Supreme Reality, the blissful Creator, who pervades the earth, interspace and the heavens, so that He may illuminate our mind towards eternal wisdom. Some Hindu practices have enriched mainstream Canadian society

and may be commonly observed at various gatherings. For example, the traditional Hindu greeting involves joining of palms signifying "oneness" and saying "Namaste" or "Namaskara", a Sanskrit word that means bowing to the divine in the person being greeted. A greeting through folded hands has now found its way in the western world realizing its spiritual inkling. Recognition of divinity in each individual is a major advancement in human thinking that eliminates differences between self and non-self. A significant number of Hindu festivals are a beautiful symphony of spiritual and cultural reflections that celebrate life and bring families together. Each festival is unique and appeals to some vital aspect of the evolution of Hindu society with a universal message in support of human thinking and aspirations.

The 'victory of good over evil' is a common theme in some festivals, such as Deepawali or Holi, now celebrated all over the world. The Deepawali, celebrated by all Dharmic societies, is now a Canadian festival celebrated for the last seventeen years at the Parliament Hill. To conclude the last article of first ever series in celebration of the Hindu Heritage month in the province of Ontario, it is important to be a good Hindu to be able to contribute and enrich the society and the world that meets human aspirations for a purposeful life.

Azad K Kaushik, DSc (Paris) President, World Brahman Federation Canada

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