

Of Humans, Consciousness and Vedic Wisdom

Violence is essential to supporting life and so long there is predation no peace can exist on planet earth. Humans kill more than any other living-beings and human society is indeed built on violence, war not being an exception. The greatest delusion among humans is that they have legitimate rights over earth and space and resources thereof creating the cultural concept of possession. A world without rules in this situation would be a jungle for humans, similar to other living creatures in nature, where Darwin's concept of 'survival of the fittest' alone is law of nature. Despite there being rule-based human society created out of jungle, the jungle has not moved out of human consciousness. A perfect human society would, therefore, must not be on the platform of power and domination, as in nature, but on the very opposite as in Dharmic traditions that imbibe interconnectedness and spirituality at the root of civilized thinking. Dharma is all about righteous conduct, giving, love and generosity that make us human. It is, thus, not without reason that Hindu Vedic rituals end with 'Shanti, Shanti, Shanti-he', literally meaning 'let there be peace, peace, peace'. In essence, it aims at self-realization of human consciousness with an underlying thread of spirituality common to humanity. Such a Vedic thought and foresight helped create India as the cradle of human civilization; the ancient wisdom thereof continues to enlighten the world to the day.

T. S. Elliot's poetic insight, "To be conscious is not to be in time" echoes Vedantic thought on consciousness. Contrary to popular Western beliefs from outright materialists

to transcendental idealists, consciousness is outside time, is real and characterized by illusory features. The Mandukya Upanishad argues that consciousness is the base of all the three states: waking (objective world outside the observing individual), dreaming (inner world of mind) and sleeping (blissful state, neither external or inner with no desires) that incarnate intellect ('Buddhi'). Uniquely, such a defined concept of 'self' connects inner characteristics of an individual with the supreme spirit, Brahman. Evidently, the intellect is central to human life as it reasons, discriminates and creates letting one to choose between reality and delusion or truth and deceit. The Bhagwad Gita scrutinizes human intelligence to the three Gunas: Sattava allows intellect to act with clarity and speed; in Rajas type, intellect obscures decision through doubt, anger or ambition; in Tamas, intellect becomes unclear and unwieldy confined to material world. Creativity originates from the transparency of intellect where it reflects the light of self from its unmanifest nature (Prakriti). The intellect is expressed through a free mind (Manas) that controls senses. The mind essentially controls attention and channelizes consciousness. Meditation provides a means of transcending mind by concentrating on a Mantra leading to self-realization. Consciousness *per se* is neither conscious nor unconscious but simply reflects awareness, knowledge and perception about something without an object. So a human in essence is just consciousness, a self-illuminating adaptation of the mind.

The real world situations all around us, be it war or its outcome to move forward, fragmentation of families and society, put us in a combat mode rather than unite for the common good. Often, these commonly encountered situations compromise and challenge human consciousness of an individual, people or society. When people drift away or break

apart how do we as people motivate them to get closer? Some remarkable insights are evident in Rig Veda hymns where being united for the common good is valued. It states,

“...Assemble, speak together, let our thoughts agree
As Gods once came together to receive their portion
Common in utterance, common in assembly, common in thought and feeling
I hereby utter a common purpose and make a common oblation on your behalf
Common is your resolve, your heart joined in one accord
United in thoughts, so that it will go well for you together”

These words of ancient wisdom hold true for all time and space to arouse our consciousness in all situations. We, Indo-Canadians, must not lose sight of this eternal Vedic wisdom as it holds lessons for us in present times where divisions and fragmentation in the society is designed with an objective to gain power and domination of the few over most. We must let consciousness prevail for harmony, peace and prosperity...

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