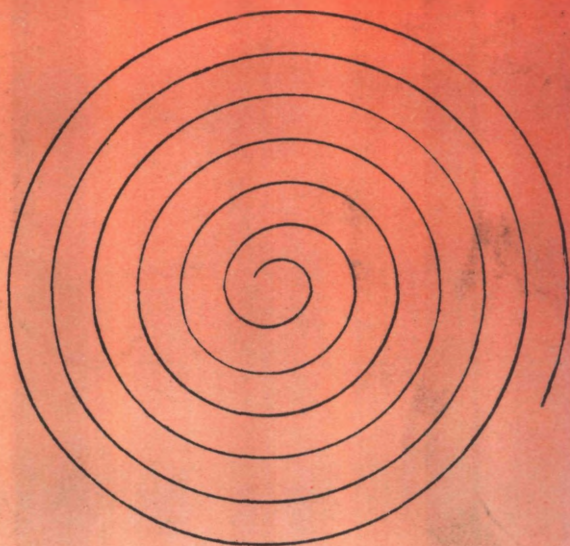


Global Economic System : A Hindu View



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PREFACE

For total integrated and balanced understanding of the past, it is inevitable to abandon the current version of Euro-centric history – which is devoid of a sense of proportion and initiate a new phase of historical investigation that takes for its canvas the entire globe. This demands a new framework, new terms of reference, new scales of value so that globalisation becomes the focus of historians rather than its present Europeanisation. The new global order has to evolve a correct strategy based on distributive justice, freedom from exploitation, poverty, want, disease and self-alienation. The global economic order has to be part and parcel of the total global order.

This illuminating message was delivered by Shri Dattopant Thengadi, Ex-M.P., founder of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh and Bharatiya Kisan Sangh while addressing a scintillating galaxy of scholars and luminaries at the Global Vision - 2000 conference at Washington DC, on August 6, 7 and 8, 1993.

The conference organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad chapter of America was to mark the Centenary Celebrations of Swami Vivekananda's Universal Vedantic Message and Chicago Address. Shri. Thengadi spoke on "Global Economic System for a Peaceful World". His lecture acclaimed as one of the most brilliant expositions of the Indian approach for an equitable world order and unexploitive welfare concept is being reproduced here.

It is now generally acknowledged that no material objective transformation can be successful unless it is preceded and accompanied by an appropriate subjective, psychological transformation. Changes in the institutional framework are comparatively easier; but they cannot yield the desired results if they are not preceded by corresponding changes in the social or human mind.

Dharma envisages ever changing socio-economic order in the light of its unchanging Universal Laws. The Laws are eternal, the order is transient.

The goal of all life is happiness, - complete, solidified, eternal and unintermittent. To be complete, happiness must rein at all levels, -physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual.

The main pre-requisite for the attainment of this goal is the socio-economic order offering full scope for the fullest development of all the faculties and aptitudes for all the individuals.

The guiding principles of the economic system deduced from the Universal Laws are readily available.

Perceive Oneness in the midst of all diversities (*Aubhaktam Vibhakteshu*), - this has been the eternal message of the *Sanatana Dharma*. It is more pertinent today, than ever before. Diversities are neither to be steam-rolled nor pampered. Dharma envisages autonomy of each human group to seek its social self-fulfilment through its own unique paradigm, and psychological integration of all such groups in a common framework of harmonious and mutually complementary, inter-relationships of One World (*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*), - each group enriching the common human understanding by making its own characteristic contribution to the collective wisdom of humanity.

The present is to be moulded in the light of the correct perspective of the past and the future.

For this purpose, it is imperative, first, to unlearn the wrong, and the anti-future lessons of the past.

Incompatible with the spirit of *Dharma* are the customary assertions of universality for any one particular regional paradigm, or the hegemonistic conception of unity parading itself as 'globalisation.' Pluralism in techno-cultural systems and 'relativisation' of technology, science and culture are the undisputable facts of life. Except *Dharma*, there can be no other 'absolute referent' for human affairs.

For total, integrated, balanced understanding of the past, it is inevitable to abandon the current version of Euro-centric history, - which is devoid of a sense of proportion, and initiate a new phase of historical investigation that takes for its canvas the entire globe. This demands a new framework, new terms of reference, a new scale of values, which would facilitate the globalisation of the focus of historians, instead of its present Europeanisation.

Appreciation of this fact about the past is indispensable for the evolution of a correct strategy for the glorious future of mankind, based upon global distributive justice, and completely free from poverty, want, fear, disease, dehumanisation and self-alienation.

But the global economic order is part and parcel of the total global order. It would be, therefore, unrealistic to think of the former without visualising first the nature of latter.

For this purpose, it is imperative to know the salient features of the present state of the total global order. Unless 'what ought to be' is rationally related to 'what is', the whole thought process would become only utopian, - an exercise in futility.

Obviously, the world of 1993 is drastically different from 1893. During any period, the relationships of classes, races, genders,

professions, nations and other human groups alter continually by shifts in population, ecology, technology, ideology and culture. The dawn of the century witnessed the nations and subsequently nation-states, as the basic, and the more important units or ingredients of mankind. Independence and sovereignty are the natural attributes of the nation-states. International agencies created first by the League of Nations and, subsequently, by the United Nations had marginal impact on the status of nation-states, though it was unfortunate that the confused United Nations could not make any distinction between the 'Nation' concept and the 'State' concept. The impact of voluntary transnational bodies dealing with environment, human rights, civil liberties, tourism, arms control, labour relations, etc., has been comparatively more. But some other forces have been giving a shock treatment to the well-entrenched nation-states.

These are :

- International fundamentalism;
- transnational terrorism ;
- International monetary bodies, trade regulators and financial corporations capable of transferring operations, funds, pollution and people across the national borders;
- international 'underground empires' of narcotics or drugs which have come to acquire, in some cases, more wealth, larger armies, more capable intelligence agencies, and more influential diplomatic services in many countries.

These forces are challenging the very concept of 'national sovereignty'.

Another challenging development is the vertical organisation of the European Community which raises two pertinent questions :

1. Whether the same psychology will not come to dominate other regions, such as, North America, the Slav land, the Arab world, the new Confucian community, the Shinto sphere, etc.? And

2. Whether such vertical regional organizations may not reduce the involved nation-states to the status of provinces by imposing supra-national controls over currency, central banking, educational standards, environment, agriculture and national budgets?

Whatever may be the future composition of different human groups comprising mankind, and the probable shift of power from the nation-states to other more comprehensive entities, the current criterion for evaluation of their relative power, and status has been their comparative economic prosperity and military might. Even in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, Paul Kennedy leans heavily on this criterion while explaining the phenomenon of American decline. But in recent years the nature of power itself is being transformed. The accelerated advance of science and technology; lasers, computers, super-computers, memory chips, viruses with which to attack computers or people, robotics, extra-intelligent electronic networks and media for moving knowledge and its precursors, - data and information; rising interest in cognitive theory, learning theory, "fuzzy logic", and neuro-biology; continual innovations in science, information technology, art, imagery, business, industry, and in such knowledge-intensive technologies as micro-electronics, advanced materials, optics, artificial intelligence, satellites, telecommunications, advanced simulation and software; biotechnology, superconductivity, and semi-conductor technology; precision-targeting, brief-case weapons, human bombs, ballistic missiles, nuclear, chemical, and bacteriological weapons; all these flow from the Knowledge Power which has come to occupy the center stage, so that even economics and war-science are becoming progressively more and more dependent on this new power.

And, most important of all, a revolution in the 'info-sphere,' i.e. the entire knowledge system, is already underway.

Against the background of this global scene, it would be realistic to envisage 'Global Economic System for a Peaceful World' which is to operate within the framework of an ideal Global Order. An integrated view, - and not a compartmentalised or a fractional one.

It is not enough to depict some romantic El Dorado as the blue-print of the new order. The problems confronting us on the practical plane are : is it feasible to replace the present economy of contrived scarcities, profit motive, and rising prices by an economy of an abundance of production, humanitarian motivation, and declining prices? Will westerners be able to understand that, in reality, it is the total basket of goods and services - and not its market price, that constitutes the national wealth?

Is it practicable to replace :

1. Monopoly capitalism through various devices, by free competition without manipulated markets;
2. Economic theories centered around wage-employment, by those centered around self-employment,
3. Ever-widening disparities, by a movement towards equitability and equality;
4. The rape of Nature by the milking of Nature;
5. Constant conflict between an individual, the society and Nature, by complete harmony between them?

It would be sheer gullibility to presume that ethical exhortations on *Sarve Nahi Sukhino Santu*, non-possession, restrained consumption and upliftment of the 'last' man would succeed in wiping out the current craze for happiness for oneself, acquisitiveness, consumerism, and exploitation.

Modern man is in a hurry; he has no time to ponder over the basic

tenets of Integral Humanism which is the modern manifestation of the *Sanatana Dharma*.

This is but natural. Social mind is never receptive to the concept of any new or alternative social order, unless it comes to realise the potentialities of the present system are more than fully exhausted, and that its continuance would inevitably become not only counter-productive but also disastrous.

Can this realisation dawn on the modern - and particularly the western mind at any point of time?

Common man everywhere prefers to be status-quo-ist and self-complacent. Probably, under similar situation Milton's God said :

"If not goodness, let calamity
Toss him unto My Bosom"

The post-1945 International Economic Order has been iniquitous to the detriment of the developing third world countries. In 1973 the latter came together and demanded negotiations leading to a new and more just Global Economic Order. In October-November 1981, the major northern developed countries denied at their Cancun (Mexico) Conference the need for structural change in the international economic arrangements. And now the Uruguay round of trade negotiations has aggravated the discontent of the Economic South against the Economic North.

If pursued, the Uruguay strategy would culminate in complete exploitation and near-extinction of the southern countries, or, alternatively, their revolt against the process, resulting in the North-South confrontation.

What is the genesis of this development ?

The internal self-contradictions of capitalism are becoming ripe, particularly so, after oil prices went up sharply in 1973, and thereby

deteriorating western system found it extremely difficult to sustain this so-called 'second oil price shock'. In spite of the collapse of communism, the economy of the developed countries continued to go downhill. Consequently, they evolved an elaborate strategy to crush the South for somehow maintaining their own economic structures intact. The Dunkel Text is a clear acknowledgement of the fact that capitalism cannot survive for long on its own strength. There is a growing realisation of this fact among western intellectuals. Nevertheless, even in the face of their retreat on economic front, they are still clinging to their customary euphoria and arrogance because they know that the most important and decisive trump-card in Global affairs is in their hands.

It is the Knowledge Power.

And their supremacy in this respect is unchallengeable, at least for the present. For, talents cannot make up immediately for the deficiency in material and monetary resources. Hence their justifiable euphoria.

The Knowledge is Power.

But power is invariably a double-edged weapon.

In possession of cultured Arjuna, the mightiest unconventional weapon of *Pashupatastra* posed no problem for mankind but with the less powerful *Brahmastra*, Ashwatthama conducted a genocide.

After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there has been a growing skepticism among humanitarian scientists about the desirability of unrestrained and unguided advance of science and technology. The stand taken by some of the advanced countries at the Rio Conference justified the earlier apprehension that they do not want to cooperate with the efforts for ecological balance, but would only dump their pollution in the court yard of the developing countries. But this strategy cannot put off for long the global environmental

catastrophe which would not spare the northern countries themselves. This is One World, and adversity anywhere would, in the long run, destroy prosperity everywhere. Even for the developed countries, these cultured scientists feel, the unrestrained advance of science and technology would prove to be baneful. For example, if the science of genetics is in a position to produce any human being of given specifications by 2040 A.D., as once claimed by it, what guarantee is there that it shall produce only Bhagwan Buddha, Lord Jesus or Mahatma Gandhi, and not Attila, Chengiz Khan or Stalin? A scientist enamoured of personal distinction or a Noble Prize and unconcerned for human welfare may raise a Frankenstein, an artificer of doom, detrimental to the human race as well as to all life on the globe. Excellence in science is no guarantee for humanitarian concern for world welfare.

There is, therefore, a strong suggestion that the 'technical know-how' - which tells us how to achieve the given purposes - should be placed under the control of the 'technical know-what' which can tell us what purposes are worth being achieved; that there should be set up a Technical Ombudsman comprising cultured men known for humanitarism to control, guide and direct the work of scientists and technologists.

This voice is feeble today, but history records that every sane voice was feeble in the initial stage and that it gathered strength and momentum in course of time because of the inherent soundness of its approach and the materialisation of factors foreseen by a few but, unpredictable for the rest. Not merely by general moral awakening, but because of the irresistible pressure of various relevant factors - ecological, demographic, cultural, developmental, strategic, etc., the demand for Technological Ombudsman also is sure to become irresistible.

Considering the acceleration of the various destructive volcanic processes on the international level, and consequently all the consequent maladies, it is obvious that, sooner rather than later,

constitution of such a Technological Ombudsman will become a reality in the not-too-distant future. That will be an epoch-making Turning Point in the modern world history. It would indicate the end of the dark age of self-defeating materialistic arrogance and the inauguration of an era of a new Global Order eagerly awaited by humanitarians in the West as well as in the East. Even the demonic forces of the day will be compelled to fall in line with this new trend in world history - not because of their 'change of heart', but on account of the ripening of their own internal self-contradictions. There is, therefore, no justification for pessimism. Revered Shri. Guruji used to quote the following one-stanza poem of Tennyson - 'The Play' - while talking with the shortsighted prophets of doom:

The Play

'Act first, this earth a stage so gloomed with woe
That you all but sicken at the shifting scenes,
And yet be patient, our Playwright may show
In some Fifth Act what this wild drama means'.

Today we are on the threshold of this Fifth Act. The Global Vision -2000 is the first scene of this last Act. This marks the commencement of a new millennia, - the Hindu, that is, the Human Millennia; for the Hindu and the Human are synonymous. On this auspicious occasion, let each one of us take a solemn vow, in the immortal words of one of the greatest humanitarians the world has ever produced, "to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations", "with malice towards none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right".

It is not without profound spiritual significance that this land of Lincoln is playing host to the centenary celebrations of the historic address of **Sri Sri Sri Sri Sri** Vivekananda, the Cultural Ambassador of the land of the earliest Rishis of mankind.