

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

(The Earth is a Family)

Literal Meaning

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is a Sanskrit phrase which means “the whole world is one single family”. It comes from the words "vasudha" meaning Earth; "eva" meaning emphasize and "kutumbakam" meaning family.

Origin

This concept finds its roots in an ancient Sanskrit literature, Hitopadesha (1.3.71) - Udāracharitānām tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam’. This means, ‘This is my own relative and that is a stranger’. Similar reference is found in Sanskrit fables, Panchatantra (5.3.37).

This concept is also propagated by Marshall McLuhan, a famous Canadian philosopher, under the name of “global village”. In ancient Africa, the same philosophy is known by the name of “Ubuntu”.

In fact the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence finds its inspiration from this concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. To quote Dr N Radhakrishnan, former director of the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, “The Gandhian vision of holistic development and respect for all forms of life; nonviolent conflict resolution embedded in the acceptance of nonviolence both as a creed and strategy; were an extension of the ancient Indian concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.”

An era of crisis is an era of challenge!

This century has witnessed mankind adopting a soul-destroying sensualism and materialism as a way of life. Man’s infatuation with machines has made him in turn mechanical, dull, devoid of noble sentiments and a greedy, opportunistic slave of mammon. Worry, despair and frustration haunt his personal life. His family life, once founded upon the bonds of sacrifice and temperance, love and co-operation, is now centered upon self-seeking rather than

altruism, money rather than morality and cynicism rather than trust. Peace, faith and harmony are conspicuous by their absence in social life. Man has fettered himself to struggling for dust of the world. The younger generation, misunderstanding freedom to imply permissiveness and lack of principles, cares two hoots for spiritual values and truths. They have come to believe that the true meaning and purpose of life is to amass wealth, enjoy sense pleasures and take care of only one's near and dear. Their only aim in life is to eat, drink and make merry; for who knows what tomorrow may bring! Modern man cannot conceive of anything nobler than crass materialism and consequently lacks the will to rise beyond self-striving, deceits, pettiness and falsehoods. We live in an age of discord, distress and craving for unlimited sensual enjoyments. This suffering and wretchedness which is afflicting modern society must be taken as a challenge by every intelligent and socially conscious person. Every sensitive, idealistic, educated man experiences shock, pain and grief over the awful state of contemporary affairs. This pain and suffering shall not be in vain; it shall give birth to a new social order! The modern times have witnessed rapid changes in the world of ideas and the world of everyday living.

It is said that the present age is the age of "communications". The question arises if we are effectively and rightly connected then why so much of hatred, anguish, disharmony, violence, dissatisfaction, anarchy. We can understand diversity – geographical, climatic, cultural, political, and religious and so on. Cannot we attain unity among various diversities? Is there any way to bring man closer to man?

Is there any answer?

Though there is an overarching sense of crisis, the intellectual problem of comprehending these crises is due to the distance created between man and God.

The idea of God within (indwelling God) can lead to self-development and moral harmony in man himself, in human relationship with others, eventually leading to self-knowledge and there begins the journey of self-awareness from wherever one is located. This philosophy accommodates the immanence of God to narrow the distance between man and God. Here,

the man recognizes and respects the intrinsic values of others and at the same time establish oneness of humanity. When one understands how to connect the outside world with the inner God, it leads to achieve moral harmony. "God resides in everyone" and that achieves "spiritual oneness" will bring with it solutions to worldly problems. Just as God is within me, he is within everybody. This consciousness helps in developing a healthy attitude towards others. It also helps in building a divine brotherhood under the fatherhood of God. Establishing divine brotherhood can alone bring man closer to man irrespective of difference in status, education, gender, religion, race, nationality, etc. Once the consciousness of the immanence of God in all human beings dawns upon man then his attitude towards others will be one of love and respect. Class conflicts would gradually disappear giving way to a divine commune based on mutual respect, reverence and co-operation. Acceptance of this principle removes the difficulties experienced by many social scientists in building the bridge between egoism and altruism.

Conclusion

This gigantic idea (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam) is an exclusively Indian contribution to world peace. The underlying philosophy of this ancient nation evolved a world-view based on the motto "Loka samasta sukhina bhavantu" (Let the entire world be happy) thousands of years ago. Surprisingly, the same philosophy has now been thought of by the United Nations in order to avoid global strife and fostering world peace.

It is not limited to the residents of India or the adherents of any particular faith or creed. That is the reason why India receives, accepts and respects people of all faiths and races.

It is pertinent to mention the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's leader, Hindutva ideologue, M S Golwalkar who said, "It is not the modern thinkers who are the first in the field to think in terms of world unity and universal welfare. Long long ago, in fact, long before the so-called modern age had set in, the seers and savants of this land had delved deep into this vital question. The ideal of human unity, of a world free from all traces of conflict and misery, has stirred our hearts since times immemorial."

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