

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Veni Vedi Veci - A New Paradigm for Sustainability

Dr. D. R. Mane

Professor, Department of Management (PUMBA), University of Pune, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Mansi Kapoor

Assistant Professor, Symbiosis International University, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Abstract:

Nature: Conceptual

Objective: To highlight the importance of raising the level of human consciousness in order to build a more meaningful hence sustainable world.

Content: The paper begins by tracing some footsteps back into time. A research into a series of modern inventions has been done to emphasise how over the centuries mankind has overpowered all limitations of muscle and brain capacity, has exploited every possible resource on planet earth to overcome time, distance and speed only to become vulnerable like never before. Climate change, rising conflicts, biological weapons, new age diseases, poverty, are all manifestations of extreme greed, distress, evil and alienation and we find ourselves on the brink of disaster. These consequences intended or unintended have been caused by a very limited perspective of what it means to be human, what we think is our place and our significance in the larger scheme of Life on planet earth and in the Universe. The paper concludes by emphasising that in order change our external world it is imperative to get to the heart of what it is to be human and collectively raise our consciousness and move towards higher aspiration. The paper highlights some eastern philosophies like the cyclical concept of time, a sense of balance between good and evil, harmony with elements of nature, rituals of worshipping, Illusion or 'Maya' which help to provide a rich context for human life.

Significance: The paper has significance in advocating the reason to shift awareness and pause to reflect on the way forward, the significance also is in raising the right questions and seeking for better answers. The use of figures and statistics is to a bare minimum so that numbers don't get the power over words and human emotion.

Keywords: Powerful, vulnerable, extreme, harmony, balance, hubris, consciousness

1. Introduction

100,000 BC , Homo Sapiens walked out of Africa beginning what we now recognize as Globalization. 30,000 years later, man discovered the power of fire and 60,000 years later discovered the art of cultivation laying down literally the roots of what we call modern civilization.

In 2400 BC, abacus was invented, the simple tool that helped man to calculate faster than his brain could. The seeds for the invention of the computer were laid way back then. 1200 years later, ironically, Chinese Alchemists were experimenting with chemicals in a quest to achieve immortality but ended up inventing a deadly gun powder, which was a secret until the 13th century and ultimately spread to the west by virtue of the Silk Route, increasing the power of men to attack, to defend, to enlarge territories, to use force.

A few more thousand years, the decimal system was being spread by the Arabs. Centuries Later, in 1614 Logarithms were invented by John Napiar in Scotland, so that large numbers could be multiplied and divided with ease. The year 1671 saw the mechanical calculator being invented in Germany.

The next century to belong to James Watt , who invented the Steam Engine in 1765 and just 3years later, the Uniform Manufacturing system was invented , En Masse Production, which redefined human life and civilization.

The next centuries' champion was Charles Babbage, who invented the first mechanical computer in 1822 which was quickly followed by the Dynamo in 1831 which ultimately gave man the power to harness the power of electricity, Dynamite by Alfred Noble in 1886, which added to Man's power to change the face of the earth. Rocks could be blasted to pave way for construction and more construction. The electric bulb followed 12 years later and the automobile by Karl Benz in 1885.

The 20th Century is the turning point in Planet Earth's history. The Wright Brothers gave wings to the human race and men could fly. 1944 saw the invention of the Mark One Computer by the US Army, and a year later came the atom bomb, another four years IBM was preparing to sell 10 to 15 computers, computers which were as big as a room, 25 years later the world saw the first PC and one year later 60 sites were on Arpanet, which was a simple time sharing network.

The year 1991 saw the three alphabets that have swept the world literally off its feet www.

The world is now digitally unified but mentally and emotionally bitterly divided.

In short, we have overcome all possible limitations, from muscle, to brain, to capacity. Used every possible resource; water, wind, solar, oil, gas. We have conquered time, speed, distance. Overpowered everything only to become extremely Vulnerablemore than ever before.

2. The Evidence

Global Warming and Climate Change:

Figures regarding climate change and global warming seem 'sensational' but that's the tragedy with numbers and statistics. They reveal shock but also lead to some amount of numbness or desensitization. One has faint memories of times when the television news would show visuals of freak weather once in a blue, but now have become a regular occurrence. Heat waves, erratic or delayed weather cycles, droughts, flash floods, earthquakes, tsunami etc have become pretty much regular. And it's no longer limited to remote and desolate places on earth, nature can strike any one any time, in any part of the globe. From people living in meagre bamboo huts in India, to Haiti to swanky apartments in London. We are on living on the edge, vulnerable to nature's fury.

- To sum up: 'Extreme Weather'!!!!

3. Conflict

Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Mali, Egypt, Hong Kong, Thailand, Parts of China, Ukraine, Libya, Gaza, Congo, Honk Kong and many more. In some places the conflict is about oil, some religion, some over territory, others power, a few for basic human rights. The figures in the UNHCR "Global Trends" report paint a desperate picture. Published to coincide with World Refugee Day, the document reveals that more than 51 million people worldwide had been forced from their homes as a result of conflict, persecution, violence or human rights violations since the end of 2013. "We are not facing an increasing trend, we are really facing a quantum leap, an enormous increase of forced displacement in our world," Antonio Guterres, High Commissioner for Refugees, said on publication of the report in June this year.

- To Sum Up: Extreme Distress!!!

4. Biological Weapons

Biological Warfare is the despicable act of deliberately spreading disease amongst humans, animals and plants by the introduction of bacteria or virus.

Anyone with a reasonably advanced pharmaceutical and medical facility has the capability of mass producing biological weapons. Once manufactured they can be launched from anything as simple as a fruit to something as big as a missile! And why has guileless man taken to producing such weapons of mass destruction, well only because it's a lot cheaper, faster, easier to use, and difficult to trace back. A simple fruit or a vegetable, at our dining table can cause extreme danger to human life.

- To Sum Up; Extreme Evil !!!

5. New Age Diseases

Advances in medical health are not able to keep pace with new diseases, which are on the rise. We are probably deluded in thinking that with all the technological inventions and modern contraptions, life would be easier, simpler but 'lifestyle diseases' are on the rise; cancer, diabetes, heart ailments, blood pressure, obesity etc.

Not only have physical ailments increased but also mental ones. It is again an irony that the more social networking increases, loneliness and depression also increase. A more extreme manifestation of mental diseases is reflected by increase in violence that we see in society. To increase to the angst, the violence is taking root in young school going children who are probably not able to make sense of all that is happening around them. The Horror of what happened in Peshawar, in Pakistan can only indicate that humanity is on the brink of madness and perversion.

- To Sum Up: Extreme Alienation !!!

6. Poverty

According to a report published in the Guardian, on 14th October, 2014;

The richest 1% of the world's population is getting wealthier, owning more than 48% of global wealth, and the report warned that this rising inequality could trigger another, deeper recession.

Oxfam published research at the start of the year showing that the richest 85 people across the globe share a combined wealth of £1tn, as much as the poorest 3.5 billion of the world's population. These ghastly figures of grotesque inequality could be indicative of the coming of a bigger economic slump worldwide.

- Sum Up: Extreme Greed !!!!

According to the Future of humanity project at Oxford, Global Catastrophic Risk, are those that pose serious threats to human well-being on a global scale. An immensely diverse collection of events could constitute global catastrophes: they range from volcanic eruptions to pandemic infections, nuclear accidents to worldwide tyrannies, out-of-control scientific experiments to climatic changes, and cosmic hazards to economic collapse"

'Existential Risk....which are like a subset of Catastrophic risks in which any unintended consequence or adverse outcomes will cause the extinction of what we call Life On Planet Earth.

Veni Vedi Veci

We Came, We Saw, We Conquered
But what did we actually conquer?

We write our own history books, so our narrative is highly flawed because it has evolved out of a limited perspective of what life is meant to be.

Since the invention of hand tools to the wondrous world wide web, from the day when man stepped out of Africa to now, we have scavenged the planet, exploited all that we could in vanity, believing the planet Earth is for our consumption, that we are the superior ones. Nature's elite.

And despite all this and more we forget that we are but one of the countless species on earth, and highly dependent on small creatures like ants and bees and butterflies, known as the keystone species for our survival.

Why the human race is considered superior ... anyways? Because we have the capability to imagine, reason, make choices, deliberate, reflect, introspect, dream, acknowledge the spirit that dwells in us, feel gratitude, take responsibility, emotionally connect to other people. But the question is we really doing that???????

No, we are pretty much living like predators, operating from a lower level of consciousness, we are only using a tiny fraction of the mind which is in really a remnant of primate conditioning, the part which constantly leads us to the flight or fight mechanisms....., only foraging for food, shelter or procreation. The only thing that keeps evolving unfortunately is that the food is becoming more exotic, the shelter is getting splendid. Need for procreation keeps manifesting in failed relationships, and the uglier aspect is that in many societies, there is no respect for the feminine spirit.

We have spoken of many times that we need to bring the issue of sustainability to the core of our actions. This concept by itself assumes that we as humans are different from or superior to nature and all its creatures.

Maybe, Darwin's theory of natural selection makes us feel that way. The Indian concept, aeons ago recognized that we humans are a part of a larger interdependent ecosystem.

In everything that we did, we did, along with all elements of nature with full partnership and reverence for all of her creation. From Ayurveda to Yoga to Festivals ...to rituals all based on harmony with the elements, and balance of all energies within and outside.

7. Harmony with Nature

The ancient Indian system recognized the power of visuals and impact of storytelling. If we see the images of Gods and Goddesses, for example Shiva, he has a serpent Vasuhki around his neck, he sits on a tiger skin, Nandi the bull, is seated before him, the river Ganges, flows from his locks before descending on earth, the crescent adorns his forehead. While being the Lord of the Universe, his body is smeared with ash signifying what is created will be in due course destroyed to further creation again.

Other, countless examples... Ganesha's mouse, Vishu's eagle, Laxmi's owl, lotus flowers, tulsi, the rudraksha beads, to fasting and feasting linked to the phases of the moon, rivers as Goddess's and the earth as mother. Every creature has a place and position and is an integral part of life. The elements of nature, considered much superior to man and were been given the status of demi gods.

The entire concept of creating a ritual of worshipping, of offering humble fruits and scented flowers was a daily reminder to mankind to take care of and respect his natural surroundings.

8. Cyclical Concept of Time

The eastern concept of time is Cyclical, meaning the constant cycle of creation, sustenance destruction and again regenerated to another cycle of creation ...destruction. This perspective has continuity which brings a sense of purpose, the longing for regeneration. It takes away fear; it gives a sense of right proportion to success and failure, life and death. It connects the past so beautifully to the present. Not only that, time takes into account Cosmic Cycles to minuscule seconds. The human civilization is just like a blip somewhere and all individual lives of no consequence in the overall scheme of things.

The western concept of time is linear, makes people frenzied, fretful and insecure, manifested by arrogance, ruthlessness. So while we can be vain about the invention of the automobile by Benz, we could pause and reflect that ages ago, there was an Asian, more specifically a Sri Lankan, who was flying an aircraft powered by the strength of his mind. And while we can also talk about stem cell, research and gene cloning, The Epic Mahabharata has a narrative of a much advanced version of in vitro fertilization.

To think that the trajectory of human progress has taken off a few years ago is vain and delusional. Ages ago, our ancestors were highly sophisticated and developed and more evolved and they operated from a much higher level of consciousness.

9. A Sense of Balance

The ancient Indian perspective of evil is based on compassion. Evil and good both had their place and role in the larger scheme of things. The constant struggle between the two forces actually led to the elevation of human beings. For example, we need darkness, to understand light, night to understand day, good to understand bad. Opposite values create newer and more exciting possibilities. But the important point to note was a sense of balance. It is mentioned in the Gita, that whenever there is imbalance between good and evil, God descends on earth to protect the weak and restore balance. Evil is not obliterated, because evil perpetuates goodness and has in itself the possibility of transformation. This thinking makes us more compassionate and resolute. Ruthless aggression vitiates the cycle of violence to create more violence.

So, in order to bring Sustainability to the core of strategy, we first need to bring it to the core of our beings. In order to progress, we first ought to give it meaning. Meaningful progress will create harmony, abundance, balance which will bring real fulfilment.

This shift will happen only when we change our perspective about where our place in this Universe is and what it means to be human.

10. Illusion

Illusion or “maya” is a concept that is so layered, that it confounds many even today. A very basic concept of illusion suggests that the world is not what it seems, it is unreal. So while we get caught up and get ensnared by all the worldly things around us, or what we cling on to so desperately is a figment of imagination. To take the concept of ‘Maya’ further, our capacity to see is limited, our capacity to hear also limited, and our capacity to feel again limited. The human apparatus is designed for a limited experience, unless we break through by trying to get to a higher level of consciousness, like Buddha did. The concept of illusion can be taken even further into the realms of physics and the nature of the universe itself.

Quantum physicists, neuroscientists, psychologists and mystics have evolved to the point where a significant paradigm shift is happening as predicted by Dr Amit Goswami, a renowned quantum physicist says “While mainstream science remains materialist, a substantial number of scientists are supporting and developing a paradigm based on the primacy of consciousness.” Goswami is convinced that the universe, in order to exist, requires a conscious sentient being to be aware of it.

“The universe is and can be viewed as symbiotically and totally unbroken, interconnected, highly networked, integrated, and harmonized. The entire universe is contained holographically in each of its parts, unifying matter, energy and consciousness by systems, subsystems and sub, sub, systems at macro and at micro levels through nonlocal, local, vacuum energy, strings and other entities yet to be understood or to be established.”

Being human means tapping on to a higher consciousness, which gives us a holistic and a unifying vision. But in order to tap into this consciousness, we need to let go of the belief that we as the human race know what is there to be known. The consciousness will be ours only if we realize that there is very little that we know actually. In fact modern physics now realizes that we are actually only beginning to understand the true nature of many phenomena.

11. Conclusion

“Modern physics has thus revealed that every sub atomic particle not only performs an energy dance but is also an energy dance; a pulsating process of creation and destruction. The dance of Shiva is the dancing Universe, the ceaseless variety of patterns that melt into one another. For the modern physicist, the dance of Shiva is the dance of subatomic matter.”

Fritjof Capra, Tao of Physics.



Figure 1

On looking closely, we see that Shiva is performing his famous cosmic dance on a human being. What could be the significance of this? The Lord of the Universe is proud? Haughty? Cruel?

Shiva is Compassion personified, also called the Innocent One, Lord of Lords,

Why is he trampling a human being under his feet while dancing?

The Lord of Lords is not trampling a human being per se but is ruthlessly trampling human pride, ego and hubris.

It's a reminder, that the Cosmic Laws are supreme, and humans however proud and seemingly powerful will always be subordinate to Laws of Nature.

Human Hubris and arrogance has bought about this havoc upon humanity and it will be humility, compassion that can do the restoration.

For a long time, we have been focussing on the How of things; it's time to delve into the why of things.

For a long time, we have been driven by curiosity; it's time to be driven by wonder and reverence.

For a long time, we have been driven by the little mind, it's time to be driven by the bigger mind or higher consciousness.

It's time when human beings begin to explore the world that's within us to conquer our own little minds to accord ourselves real power.

Our aspirations should be to evolve to a higher state of being or consciousness.

As Einstein says, a problem cannot be solved by the same mindset that created it in the first place.

The breakdown of all the old schools of thought is evident all over the world, the new way is approaching but we seem to be living in denial.

It seem fantastical now, but there is a possibility, that we will get 'back to the basics model' for everything. The tribal mindset is on its way back, small communities living by their own rules, producing and consuming what they produce locally could be a way of living in the future.

What we term as niche will slowly take centre stage. Education will be reinvented, in an age when there is information overload; people will want more meaningful lessons, real skill advancement, and personal fulfilment.

Big institutions will suffer the biggest casualty as smaller, more nimble agile and sensitive organizations will come up.

The purpose of this writing is not deride what has been happening, or to belittle. It's to remind ourselves to look within the treasures that we have that have been neglected over the centuries. It would be a tragedy to tag Indian Philosophy with any religion. Just like Yoga is recognised the world over as holistic exercise, we in India have a treasure trove of brilliant ideas, waiting to be explored but sadly we limit ourselves by viewing things with the lens of religion. India is the world's cradle for spiritual knowledge. The world has to come together and explore.

It's absolutely appropriate to end with the traditional Indian greeting of 'Namaste' which when literally translated means 'I bow to you' but deeply signifies the fact that, I acknowledge that the divinity that dwells in you also dwells in me.

12. References

- i. Understanding Shiva, D.K.Hari, Hema Hari, Sri Sri Publication Trust, Bangalore.
- ii. The Tao of Physics, Fritjof Capra, Flamingo, Harper Collins, London
- iii. The Ganges in Myth and History, Steven G Darian, Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, New Delhi.
- iv. <http://giinnovations.moonfruit.com/earth-funeral/4585774434>
- v. <http://inventors.about.com/od/astartinventions/a/FamousInvention.htm>
- vi. <http://www.livescience.com/33749-top-10-inventions-changed-world.html>
- vii. <http://www.globalissues.org/issue/178/climate-change-and-global-warming>.
- viii. <https://www.google.co.in/search?q=guardian+report+inequality+october+riches>
- ix. <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780199606504.do>
- x. www.forbes.com/.../the-85-richest-people-in-the-world-have-as-much-wealth-as-the-3-5-billion-poorest
- xi. <https://www.google.co.in/search?q=nataraj+images>
- xii. <https://www.google.co.in/images?q=tombstone+images>
- xiii. <http://www.social-consciousness.com/2011/07/quantum-activist-science-documentary.html>.
- xiv. <http://www.unhcr.org/53a155bc6.html>.

