

Jeevan Vidya : Proposal for Right Understanding

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All the major problems in our world today have been created by human beings. Whether the problems relate to resource depletion, pollution, waste creation and global warming or to war, terrorism, or interpersonal problems - they are interrelated and result in making the earth unhealthy.

If we look at the entire universe we find there are units and there is space. The units can be classified into four broad categories

- 1) The material order (*padarthavastha*) like soil, water, minerals, and all 'man made items' around us (which have not been *made* by man but merely *transformed* from natural resources). In fact there is no growth or development in the material order - only a conversion or transformation from one state into another. It is quite an irony that what we refer to as 'development' today is entirely based on transformation and not growth!
- 2) The plant order (*pranavastha*) includes all the greenery and vegetation This order is characterized by growth and regeneration;
- 3) The animal /birds order (*jeevavastha*).
- 4) The human order (*gyanavastha*)

The third and the fourth categories are made up of two separate entities-the physical body and non- physical self or the I.

The first three states or categories co-exist in a harmonious and mutually fulfilling manner. The plant order is dependent on the material order while the animal and human orders are dependent on both the material and plant order. While the higher orders take nourishment from the lower orders, they also enrich the lower orders. The trees draw sustenance from the soil but the leaves shed by the tree enriches the soil. The relationship between the three is not only that of mutual enrichment but there is no wastage as far as these three stages are concerned.

But while human beings are dependent on all the three orders, their own participation with the rest of the three orders is not in harmony. And above all their relationship with their fellow human beings is also not in harmony. Human beings do not seem to be living in a mutually fulfilling manner either with their own specie or with the rest of the three orders. They are only exploiting and not enriching the other orders. Human beings are said to be social animals but when we examine this statement we find that all animal species are known to behave in a similar manner irrespective of the place of their birth. Animals have definite eating habits (either vegetarian or meat eating) regardless of the fact whether they are dwelling in Africa, Asia or Europe. In short their behavior is definite. This is true of all animal species unless a particular animal has stayed in close proximity with human beings and learns to behave in an unnatural manner. For instance cows are vegetarian. In Europe when they were fed with non vegetarian food it resulted in the mad cow disease.

Human beings are different. We know that two people not only from the same cultural background but also from the same family can be very different from one another, in their behavior. In the entire existence, human beings alone have the freedom to choose, because they act or behave according to the way they perceive or understand reality. Human beings have a choice only at the level of perceiving (behaviour or action) but they seem to have no choice results of it.

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In present times an idea which has gathered force is that there is no reality and it is all a matter of individual perception; that there is no universal truth and that each one of us has the right to our own truth (perception). The individual's right to his perception, which is termed as truth, is known as freedom. In the absence of the knowledge of reality or definition of universal truth, this notion of individual freedom at one level, culminates in 'your freedom stops where my nose begins' and at another level in 'survival of the fittest'. Hence to maintain some kind of an order or balance in society, this notion of individual freedom, necessitate an outside intervention. This intervention, has until now, come either in the form of moral teachings from religious heads or in the form of Constitution, the back bone of the modern nation state. But these have obviously not worked for us or else we would not be facing the present crises which are threatening the very existence of human beings.

Jeevan Vidya or Madhyastha Darshan is a proposal which tries to draw our attention to reality the harmony in existence. Darshan is translated as philosophy, but it is more than that. Darshan means to see. Seeing here is used in the sense of understanding or knowing and ultimately realising. Darshan is to see reality as it is. Based on what we see and understand, we act. Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting is done through the body i.e. through the eyes, ears, skin, nose and tongue but the understanding is done by the self or the I.

मैंने सर्वप्रथम मई 2004 में सिद्ध मसूरी में श्री सोमदेव त्यागी जी के प्रबोधन में शिविर किया। पहले मैं अपने आसपास के वातावरण से प्रभावित हो जाती थी, परंतु अब विचारों में आने वाली इच्छाओं को जाँचने की प्रक्रिया प्रारंभ हो गई है। अब मेरे लिए क्या सार्थक है, इसकी जाँच मैं अपने अधिकार पर कर सकती हूँ। अब मुझे 'अच्छा लगना' और 'अच्छा होना' में अंतर स्पष्ट हो गया है। अच्छा लगना शरीर सापेक्ष है व अच्छा होना जीवन सापेक्ष। मानव मूल्यों विश्वास, सम्मान आदि का वास्तविक अर्थ मुझे समझ में आया। मुझे ईश्वर का वास्तविक अर्थ समझ में आया और पूजा के बारे में भी पता चला।

कोमल सिंह चौहान
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All units are connected to all other units through space. The proposals of Madhyastha Darshan merely draw our attention to this reality (understanding of units and space and units submerged in space), but each one of us will ultimately have to see and then realize that reality within ourselves. All our actions are a result of this seeing: the only choice we have is between knowing the reality as it is or assuming it to be something else.

The proposals are about the essence of existence: Harmony in existence, which is in the form of coexistence, as units submerged in space, and expansion of this principle of co-existence (or harmony) at all levels of existence: the self, the body, the family, society, nature, and the entire existence. The proposals are presented in 8-day workshops and participants are requested not to believe them but examine them in their own right and not on the basis of a text or scripture, or

sayings of great men; not even on the basis of conclusions drawn based on "scientific" instruments. The proposals are to be accepted only after a thorough examination by each of us using three methods a) introspection: see if it is true for us; b) inspection: see if it is true for those around us and c) survey: see if it is true for the rest of humanity. Only then can one be satisfied and accept the proposals. Participants are requested not to believe but to examine.

The essence of Madhyastha Darshan is based upon two fundamental facts: that it is the human being who *understands* and acts accordingly and that the desire behind each of his actions is *to be happy*. Irrespective of what we do, the essential motivation behind every action, is our desire to be happy. So if we are unhappy, the fault lies with our perception of the reality. We take all actions (from our desire to be happy), either by knowing /understanding the reality or assuming the reality. The desire to be happy is intrinsic to all human beings but we differ in our perception of the reality. However *we can evolve from perceiving to knowing*. This can be accomplished through existence based human centred education. This is where Madhyastha Darshan comes in.

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We have two kinds of desires: those desires which are materialistic and those that are non-materialistic. Materialistic desires like food, clothes, shelter and facilities/instruments of all kinds are limited, quantifiable and have weight. We do not desire them constantly and need a change, a break, an interval before we need them again. We need food but we need to stop eating before the desire for food arises again. As a matter of fact if we do not take intervals or frequently change the form, the very object of our desire can soon become intolerable to us!

There is another set of desires which are non-materialistic like respect, trust, happiness, peace etc. We desire them continuously. If we lacked trust or respect even for one moment, we would feel very uncomfortable and unhappy. These desires are not quantifiable but are qualitative in nature. If we look at these two categories, of desires, we find that the materialistic desires are needed either for nurturing and protecting our bodies or to use our bodies effectively, while the non materialistic desires (love, respect, trust etc.) are not a requirement of the body. These are needed by an entity, referred to as self or "I". "I" needs trust, respect etc. all the time. So materialistic desires are needed by/ for the body while the non materialistic desires are the need of the "I" or the self. In fact most of the time if the needs of the "I" are not fulfilled, we may even overlook our bodily needs for e. g: even if we are hungry and we need food, it is acceptable only when it is given with respect, (which is a desire of the "I").

As both desires are of entirely different nature, they require entirely different programmes for fulfillment. Unfortunately in the absence of this distinction between the needs of the body, and the needs of the I, the entire humanity is focused only on fulfillment of the needs of the body. But fulfillment of bodily needs does not ensure fulfillment of the non materialistic needs of the "I". This then is the flaw in our understanding wherein we perceive or assume our body to be the same as the I. This results in unhappiness because it leads us to design programs for greater accumulation and exploitation of nature on the one hand, and domination and exploitation of fellow human beings on the other. We spend all our waking hours fulfilling the needs of the body and make no effort towards fulfilling the desire of the "I" for mutual trust and respect. Even those working for uplifting the down trodden are thinking mostly in materialistic terms.

Madhyastha Darshan helps in understanding the I or the self. As human beings we are constantly trying to understand the self as well as 'make sense out of' things around us. Based on our understanding of ourselves and these units we then establish a relationship with them. This results in either happiness or unhappiness. Once we understand the self we can go on to understand the body and the harmony between the self and the body. For instance we understand that health is a natural state and intrinsic to the human body. Absence of this natural state of health culminates in disease. Disease is the absence of health and not vice versa i.e., health is not absence of disease. So if we understand the harmony in the body and the fact that the body is an instrument of the I, we (I) are motivated to take the responsibility of maintaining the health of our bodies.

We also understand that needs of the body are limited and needs of the I are continuous. Once we understand that the needs of the body and I are different, and that the body is an instrument of the I, to help I achieve its (non- material) desires, we can also determine the material requirements of our body very clearly. With this understanding, for the first time, we can define prosperity. Prosperity is not a certain amount of money in our bank but it is a feeling of confidence and assurance that we are capable of producing more than enough to take care of our body, based upon our realization that that needs of the body are limited and there are abundant resources in nature. This is a challenge to the widely taught dictum in modern economics that 'human desires are unlimited and resources are limited', which seems to be true only when under a mistaken notion, we try to fulfill the needs of the I, which are non materialistic in nature, through accumulation of physical facilities.

We realize that relationship between human beings is essentially between one "I" and the other "I" and not between one body and another body. Also that relationship is IS; there is no need to create it: we only

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need to recognize and fulfill it. We also realize that at the core, the other “I” is exactly the same as me. Proposals are given concerning the basic human values which are the intrinsic human expectations of: trust (*vishwas*), respect (*samman*), affection (*sneha*), care (*mamata*), guidance (*vatsalya*), reverence (*shraddha*), gratitude (*kritagyata*), glory (*gaurav*) and love - no otherness - (*prem or ananyata*). The proposals are given to help understand and realize these values imbedded in all of us. All of us feel good when these values are fulfilled. They get fulfilled on recognition of relationship, which is a matter of understanding - seeing the harmony in relationship.

The effort is to see the reality of everything and not get stuck in words. Understanding the meaning of a word is actually understanding the reality represented by the word. Proposals help us understand and see reality as it is and thus see the harmony in existence. There is no sermonizing about values but an attempt to understand the values as they are. There is no preaching here; only an attempt to understand the way things are, the way we are related to them and then act accordingly by recognising relationships based on this understanding. The proposals are about understanding and ultimately realizing these values within us, and also realizing that we are happy whenever we recognize and fulfill these expectations irrespective of the other. In other words we realize that the key to our happiness and hence the responsibility for our happiness lies with us and no one else. This is how we realize true freedom or *swatantrata*.

विद्या का शिविर करने के पूर्व मैं भ्रमवश फैली मान्यताओं के अनुसार अपने को धन, पद प्रभाव के आधार पर विशेष बनाने का प्रयास करता रहता था। जीने का लक्ष्य अधिक से अधिक सुविधा-संग्रह था। शरीर के संरक्षण-सदुपयोग की तो कोई समझ ही न थी। अपनी ही सोच को सही मानकर दूसरों पर थोपने के कारण पारिवारिक संबंधों में मतभेद हो जाते थे। प्रकृति, आकाश, अस्तित्व से सम्बन्धित जिज्ञासाओं का कोई समाधान नहीं था। जीवन विद्या शिविर के बाद मुझे 'मैं' का ज्ञान हुआ। शरीर को साधन मानकर इसके पोषण संरक्षण की जिम्मेदारी स्वीकारता हूँ। बिना भाव के सम्बंध अनुबंध हो जाता है। परिवार में व्यवहारिक समझ विकसित हुई है। समाज के प्रति अपनी जिम्मेदारी स्वीकार कर लोक शिक्षा में योगदान दे रहा हूँ। प्राकृतिक नियमों को पहचानने तथा इनके तहत आवर्तनशील विधि से चक्रिय क्रम के अनुसार स्वावलम्बन करने का प्रयास जारी है।

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सहकारी डेरी प्रशिक्षण एवं शोध संस्थान, कानपुर

Jeevan Vidya attempts to make us understand universal human goals which are applicable to all. It thus helps us conceptualize a human society which is seamless and beyond borders. The proposals go on to explain the different orders in existence with all their various characteristics of *roop* (shape and size, which are changing with time and space), *guna* (the effect of one unit on another, which is also changing with time and space) and their *swabhava* and *dharma* (the intrinsicness, which remains the same; it is constant and unchanging). So we understand the unchanging, in the changing universe and thus establish a relationship with all units in existence taking into account that which is constant. We also distinguish between the needs of the body and the I, and understand that all material facilities or conveniences are ultimately only for nurturing (protection (clothes, shelter) and right utilization (all instruments, conveniences) of the body, which is an instrument of the I. We also

understand that the desires of the I cannot be fulfilled by material conveniences and to fulfill those, we need to design a different programme. Right understanding ultimately leads to realization which results in harmony and continuity of happiness.