



Neohumanism: **Panacea for Global Malaise**

By Professor Aditya Mohanty

THE GLOBE IS engulfed in an unprecedented crisis. Scientific and technological advancements have turned the planet into a global village, as it were. Natural barriers posed by mountains, oceans, deserts and intractable terrains have thinned into insignificance. Limitations of space and time have been greatly overcome. People have access to the global corpus of knowledge through the web. But the striking irony is that man has created artificial divides in the name of race, nationality, language, religion, sect, and community. For our ancestors, wandering in the forests in quest of food and shelter, the obstacles were posed from without, in the form of extremities of weather, wildfire, ferocious animals, natural barriers like mountains and forests.

But today, the threat has its genesis from within. Though globalization has become a stark reality in the physical sphere and economic domain on account of international trade and commerce, exchange of technical know-how, digital revolution the artificial divides stand as veritable constraints on the way to global co-existence and harmony. The paradox is that though humans have become enormously empowered, the means of empowerment threaten our very survival on the planet. The social and political institutions, created for the good of man work out towards their detriment.



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At the end of the day, mankind is left with two exclusive alternatives, i.e. either to live together as part of a global community or court mass extinction. But this does not have to lead to pessimism.

The darkest part of the night awaits a new dawn. The cosmos emerged out of primeval chaos. In the social domain, crisis serves as the

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catalyst of transformation. Given the fact of extreme decadence in every walk of life and that the social structures are falling apart, these are, perhaps, pointers to the coming of a new era. Interestingly, cure precedes crisis. The antidote of a malady exists before the onset of the malady: food precedes hunger. Food is prepared in the mother before a newborn sees the light of the day. Food and water were available much before the advent of humans on Earth. The new age ideas are already in place to address the crisis, looming large before humanity.

In the frantic bid to come out of the blinding darkness, humanity has tried alternative paradigms which have betrayed their inherent inadequacies and limitations leading to a paradigm crisis. There is the necessity of a holistic paradigm which can pave the way for global co-existence. The crisis today is neither lack of natural resources, nor overpopulation because Mother Earth cannot have a population that she cannot feed. The crisis pertains to human psyche. It is essentially a crisis of values. Values serve as the protasis of synthesis. Values constitute the core of 'culture'. Culture is the elan vital of civilization. Devoid of culture, a civilization meets its inevitable doom. Values bring about the sense of refinement and subtlety in our thinking and action. They impart sense of goal, thereby, the sense of direction. They help one perceive unity beneath the apparent diversities, and serve as the axis for resolution of conflicts. The nature of value depends on the nature of composition of the collective body and exigencies at hand. Given the fact that we live in a globalized world that calls for the necessity of a holistic 'value-paradigm'.

Neohumanism is a holistic socio-economic-spiritual paradigm enunciated by Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar which spells out the modalities of

the ethics of 'live and let live'. It is based on the metaphysical vision that the Universe has its origin from a singular source and the gamut of evolution tends to converge to a singular destination. Interestingly, the point of origination and destination are one and the same. Creation is the progression from one to many and many to one, rightly termed as *Advetadvadetadveta Vada* by Sarkar.¹ Since the universe has its origin from a primordial matrix which is of the nature of pure-consciousness, everything animate and inanimate is potentially conscious and possesses 'mind'. This serves as the ontological basis for building a society whereof human beings, the most developed creatures on the planet, have the capacity to perceive this pristine truth and act accordingly. Though apparently things and beings are different and disparate, they share identical essence at the core. This lends rationale to the ethical claim that everything has its *existential-value* or *intrinsic-value*, irrespective of its utility-value for the humans. Every part, howsoever tiny and microscopic, does contribute to the harmony of the whole. Any harm to the part is sure to jeopardize the health and harmony of the whole. Neohumanism is based on the perception that everything is related to every other thing and Nature is an organic whole. In the cosmic labyrinth, every fabric is bound up with every other. Any rupture in a micro part is sure to have its bearing on the whole. The wellbeing of the whole presupposes the wellbeing of parts. Though apparently different, things and beings are wedded to one

¹This view of progression is part of Sarkar's concept of *Brahmacakra*, the cycle of Brahma, which the movement of creation away from God, from the "subtle" to the "crude", from consciousness to matter, and then from the crude to the subtle, back to God again. From *Baba's Grace, Discourses of Shrii Shrii Anandamurti*, Ananda Marga Publ. 1973.



another either proximately or remotely. Besides, it underlines the fact of interdependence of things and beings. In the food chain, the higher lives on the lower. Knowingly or unawares, we share underlying affinity with one another. Human beings give out carbon dioxide which sustains plants and plants give out oxygen which has survival-value for human beings. We live on vegetation. The trees and plants live on nutrients available under the soil. *As above, so below.* All existents, from a tiny atom across solar system and galaxy have striking structural identity. The state of nature exhibits grand design, characterized by harmony and uniformities. The fact of inter-dependence and inter-relatedness provides the rationale why man must play the role of a steward in extending his protective love and nu for much of this for the non-humans.

Such a social order can be in, only when we succeed in addressing the constraints or bottlenecks that foster distinction, disparity, and artificial divides in form of geo-sentiments, socio-sentiments, and humano-sentiment. Man is a creature with instincts, sentiments and reason. Instinctive propulsions are bound up with

organic nature of man. Sentiments are more psychic than physical. Under the sway of sentiments, 'mind' runs after the pleasurable, irrespective of consequences. 'Sentiments do not have the backing of 'reason'. 'Reason' is the faculty of discrimination that helps one have the sense of right and wrong, propriety, and impropriety in respect of both 'ends' and 'means'. When sentiments exert their spell on human mind, 'reason' or rational considerations get eclipsed. On the contrary, when 'reason' is in command, the influence of sentiments gradually get weakened. 'Reason' is a double-edged sword. It can be used and abused as well. When abused, man degenerates to a state which turns out to be more harmful than the animal counterparts. Faculty of 'Conscience' is nothing other than the 'awakened-reason' wherein 'reason' is harnessed in the pursuits of the 'righteous', 'good' or the 'noble'.

The sentimental attachment for a geographical region prevents one from thinking beyond the interests of the people living in one's region. Under the sway of 'geo-sentiment' one remains obsessed with the wellbeing of people

belonging to one's region, having been blissfully oblivious and indifferent to the concerns and interests of people living in other regions. Geo-sentiment finds its expression in the form of geo-religion, geo-economics, geo-patriotism and so on. When one is driven by geo-religious sentiment one tends to consider a particular place to be holy and a particular river to be sacred. If God is omnipresent, then every place is place is holy. The very idea of going on pilgrimage to holy places is devoid of any rationale whatsoever. The belief that a holy dip in a particular river shall cleanse our sins is grossly unfounded and misleading. Goaded by geo-economic sentiment, a politician, in order to woo the electorate, may go in favour of establishing a steel plant in his area, even though the raw materials like iron ore and ancillary facilities are not available in the vicinity. Under the influence of geo-patriotism, people think in terms of securing and promoting the interests of people living within a national boundary, ignoring the interests of people of the neighboring countries.) Geo-patriotism takes the form of jingoism (blind national sentiment).

Geo-sentiment can be countered by arousing the dormant rationality in people and encouraging them to have access to knowledge of 'truth' through proper study and critical reflection. Rationality is the unique possession of human beings which distinguishes them from the non-humans. Animal existence is more physical than psychic whereas human existence is more psychic than physical. Presence of rationality helps one distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, pleasurable and the preferable. With the rise of rationality, the influence of geo-sentiments begins to wane.

Wider than 'geo-sentiment' is 'socio-sentiment, where man thinks in terms of the interests of the community one lives in. Though wider in scope, it results in ethnic, religious, communal discords and dissensions and turns out to be more baneful for the society at large. Actuated by socio-sentiment, fundamentalists give the clarion call to their fellowmen regardless of the regions they live in, '*Hindus world unite. Muslim of the world unite*'. It leads to clear polarization in the form of religious divides. Socio-sentiment takes the form of colonialism when people of a particular country try to use another country for providing raw materials for production and in turn, use it as the market for

the finished goods, The imperialists inject inferiority complex in the minds of ruled so that they consider the ruling class to be superior in respect the language they speak, their costumes and customs. Spread of Pseudo culture is part of the malicious strategy of the rulers to divert the minds of the youth from the vital issues so as to perpetuate their exploitation. 'Dogma' is another artifice by which people are prevented from access to proper knowledge and consequent allegiance to truth. Dogmas regiment human mind and stifle free flow of human intellect. Dogmas and superstitions are to be fought out in fronts at every cost so that it makes room for a healthy and holistic human society. Socio-sentiment can be countered by fostering proto-spirituality whereby human mind, having been immune to the limiting influence of the geo-sentiments and socio-sentiment the thoughts and actions of people at large, are goaded by the principle of social equality (*samasamaja tattva*). There are two basic principles that trigger the rise of social, economic and political institutions and practices, namely, the 'Principle of selfish pleasure' (*atmasukha tattva*) whereof the interests of a particular group, community or section of people remain paramount and the sole driving force and the principle of social equality whereof every form of social venture is initiated and sustained by the vision of unity or oneness underlying apparent diversity and disparity.¹

Higher than socio-sentiment, is 'human-sentiment' whereby one identifies himself with people across the world, irrespective of the place they live in. Though it provides a unitary platform for human beings to live together, it ignores the interests of the non-humans. Human society is one and indivisible. This provides a shared vision by which people unite under a common banner with the conviction that they are offspring of the divine (*amrutasya putrah*) and possess the same essence at the core, irrespective of peripheral differences with regard to physiognomy, ethnicity, nationality, caste colour, creed, gender etc.

Existence and wellbeing of the human species is out and out parasitic on existential wellbeing of the non-humans. Neohumanism grows out of the inherent inadequacies of 'humanism' which makes room for inter-creature conflicts, i.e. man versus the non-humans as the

¹ Sarkar, P.R., *The Liberation of Intellect—NeoHumanism*. Kolkata: Ananda Marga Publications, 1991.

Neohumanism construes the universe to be the patrimony; therefore, it leaves no room for disparity, discrimination and exploitation. Rather it paves the way for the creed and credo of 'live and let live'.



former seeks to live at the cost of the latter. Neohumanism is a cosmo-centric or God-centered ideology vis-à-vis the self-centered, matter-centered and dogma-centered ideologies that have ruled the roost. The self-centered ideology, like Capitalism, is sustained by the propensity of acquisition (*pipilika vritti*) which eventually leads to exploitation of majority by the minority. The intelligent minority live at the cost of the majority leading to progressive polarization, with the opulent on the one hand and impoverished on the other. The matter-centered ideology like Communism construes 'matter' as the ultimate reality and 'economic conditions' to be the sole determinants of social change. Obsession with 'matter' tends to the degeneration human mind and prevents its expansion. There remains no room for cultivation of subtler ideation and expansion of human mind. This eventually results in 'Individualism' in the name of promotion of 'collective wellbeing'. Dogma-centered ideologies make room for the reign of fundamentalism and divide humanity. Humanism has been made a mute witness to illicit legacy of the self-centered, matter-centered and dogma-centered ideologies. Hence, there is the necessity of Cosmo-centered or God-centered ideology, which construes every creation to be the unmistakable expression of one primordial reality. Despite differences in respect of names (*nama*) and forms (*rupa*) everything at the core, is holy and divine. Everything is bound up with every other thing by the bond of cosmic fellowship. Neohumanism construes the universe to be the patrimony; therefore, it leaves no room for disparity, discrimination and exploitation. Rather it paves the way for the creed and credo of 'live and let live'.

Human beings, on account of possessing more developed psyche, bear the onus of leading

the rest of creation under their stewardship. This seminal awareness constitutes the focal vision of neohumanism. Neohumanism, spells out a viable alternative to Capitalism, Communism. Neohumanism is tempered by the vision of 'oneness'. Since every created thing and being is veritable expression of the supreme subjectivity (*Paramapurusa*), everyone deserves to be looked upon as form of the divine, and therefore to be treated with love and dignity. Sarkar doesn't stop at giving only an ideological blueprint but spells out the modalities of translating it into a living reality by giving a socio economic program, an appropriate educational module, and an exhaustive roadmap for social engineering, so that a cosmic society based on love and fellowship can be a living reality.

Neohumanism would remain a mere ideal or a utopia unless there is expansion of the human mind. Besides enunciating a sound and holistic paradigm, Sarkar goes ahead by emphasizing that the human psyche has to be expanded to imbibe the neohumanistic vision. So, there is a necessity of the practice of spirituality leading to the progressive expansion of 'mind' on account of which the frontier of empathy is broadened and there is increasing identification with the so called 'other'. Eventually, one finds oneself at peace with the rest of the creation. This is the state of perfect spirituality where one realizes the cosmic relatedness and interdependence, thus feeling the life-throb in every living entity as well as in those that are apparently inanimate or lifeless. When one is established in this state, 'Neohumanism' becomes the way of life and the order of the day. Where people live in loving fellowship with flora and fauna and even inanimate objects, then only one can claim that we have an ideal society with 'man' at humans as the protective mentor of one and all.