

## **BALANCING DUALITY: AN INDIAN APPROACH TO BETTER THE WORLD**

**Professor Dharamdas M Shende**  
Faculty of Humanities-Dept. of English  
RTM Nagpur University, Nagpur-440033 (India)  
dmshende@yahoo.co.in

*It is said that the Earth is balanced on the head of Shesha (snake).  
Even the slightest disturbance in this balance is bound to result in the fall of the Earth.*

—( from *Indian Mythology* )

### **INTRODUCTION**

Extremism does not help us construct human world and its civilization. It does not help us envision human world in its totality. The world is as much incomplete as human life imagined without man or woman. We imagine the completeness of human civilization only through the balanced relationship between man and woman. One of the noble voices from the canon of American literary civilization, Walt Whitman advocates : “Lack one lacks both,...” ( “Song of Myself”: l. 53, p. 31) To visualize human civilization as a whole we have to welcome the extremes and dualities. And maintain balance between these extremes which are known as ‘binary opposition’ by social linguists. To maintain balance between dualities itself is the right cultural diplomacy. If we wish to sustain human world and its civilization caught between dualities in war-torn modern human civilization we need to think of Buddha’s teaching of middle path as a cultural diplomacy for balancing duality.

Cultural Diplomacy is defined by different scholars in different ways. It deals with life-saving alternative. “Cultural diplomacy alludes to the official practice of governments conducting international relations (negotiating treaties, alliances, shaping policy, etc) using soft power. For thousands of years, the use of violence has been the basis and ultimate sanction of power politics-the endpoint being war. Cultural diplomacy, by stressing soft power in politics, offers a potentially life-saving alternative”. (<http://en.wikipedia>). It estimates the need of regulation and control between different geographies and different nationalities.

Regulation and control through cultural diplomacy helps us maintain a balanced relationship between different identities and also help us control war and violence. Imbalanced relationship between different civilizations and cultures will break the bond of human relationship between different civilizations of the world. This presentation therefore attempts to throw some light on duality which is the essence of life with a view to articulating a point that balancing duality is a must for better world if we wish to envision a better human civilization.

### **EVERLASTING DUALITY: LOSS OF EVIL IS LOSS OF GOOD**

Of course, we must be familiar with the civilization of the period of Mahabharatha. Its civilization does not speak of the world without evil. It could not sustain its life for

longer time due to lack of proper diplomacy of Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna failed to maintain balance between the Kauravas and Pandavas. The War was fought between them causing the death of near and dear ones at Kurukshetra. Because of the support of Lord Krishna to Pandavas for the cause of good, Pandavas won the war but they could not enjoy their Kingdom they won from the Kauravas. Kauravas are portrayed as the symbol of evil of that civilization. That civilization was almost over after the defeat of Kauravas at Kurukshetra. It means the loss of the evil implies the loss of the good. This is a universal truth and it should not be overlooked. It is very much part of the American conscience articulated by Hawthorne through the story of "Dr. Rappacini's Daughter". This story also utters the same truth that the loss of evil caused the loss of good. The good and evil are not antagonists in human civilization. These forces must be considered as complementary to each other. What we do need to know or realize is that one has to maintain the balance between good and evil. One of the major voices of the American Nobel laureates, John Steinbeck singles out that "we have only one story...all novels all poetry are based on never ending contest in ourselves of good and evil." (*East of Eden*). All these different facets of different civilizations speak of the only truth that is of balance and this is real cultural diplomacy which needs to be exercised for better tomorrow in human civilization. It was the concern of Buddha's teaching through his very first lesson on Middle Path which has to be traced in order to avoid and overcome the extremes in human life.

Human world is full of dualities. Some of them are inborn and natural. Nature itself maintains balance between natural dualities. Nature is constantly engaged in its work of exercising the force of equality which invariably sustains the balance in its entire creations. It supports the existence of its creation through the mechanism of symbiotic relation. Apart from natural dualities, we have so many manmade dualities which are the part of the deliberations of mankind. Such deliberations are known as the culture. Culture itself is a big diplomacy institutionalized by mankind against the law of nature. It clearly implies that nature stands for equality whereas culture stands for the manmade agency for the exploitation of the law of nature. It could be because of the self-centered concern of human beings to their environment that they exploit it to meet their selfish ends at the cost of others.

Due to the manmade deliberation and its selfish approach to its civilization entire human world is divided into the center and the periphery. This division of the human world is one of the permanent but worst dualities in human civilization. It has dismantled and bulldozed human relationship in modern human civilization which is now divided into the East and the West or the West and the rest. It seems to be falling apart today. It is constantly involved in thinking of the supremacy of one over the other. Its policy of supremacy/hegemony is disturbing the balance between different nationalities and even individualities. Like the story of balance of the Earth on the head of *Shesha* in Indian mythology it may cause the fall of the Earth. Hence, it needs to be balanced with Buddha's middle-path.

Lord Buddha, in his very first sermon at Sarnath in Benaras, touched upon the idea of middle-path. It is singled out by one of the Buddhist scholars like Christman Humphreys. In order to explain that middle-path he says:

In any event the Opposites are with us; we live in a bi-polar field. We observe in ourselves the difference of sex, of psychological temperament. We notice in-breathing and out-breathing, night and day, growth and decay, not merely temporal but as forces operating to produce unceasing tension, as two protagonists in a constant war which none can ever win. (90-91).

He further says that both of these poles are as “unworthy and unprofitable”. In order to avoid such polar conflict Buddha explained middle path which always helps mankind to transcend the manmade dualities in the name of culture. The concept of middle path gives rise to far more subtle problems than the avoidance of these two extremes. It opens the whole field of duality for examination and right reaction the way Hegelian paradigm of “dominance and resistance” opens new vista of understanding human civilization as a whole.

To balance natural dualities may be beyond the reach of human beings, however to balance the manmade duality is not beyond the reach of human beings. Those manmade dualities of existence might have posed serious problems before mankind but the gravity of those problems is taking more serious turn than ever today. Human existence today is recognized as war-torn human civilization. In order to think of a peaceful existence of human civilization against the backdrop of the war-torn human civilization once again we will have to think of the middle path as a cultural diplomacy. “(T)he interplay between two forces usually creates the conditions for a third element to emerge” (*Critical Humanism*: 2003, 59). This emerging third element in fact is the result of dialogue between the extremes which continues the cycle of human civilization in the manner of Buddha’s doctrine of *Paticcasamuppada* (Snelling: 1987, 74). It will help us see the better world in due course for the betterment of human life on this planet called the Earth. Without middle path life, which consists of extremes/dualities oppositions, will bring an end to human civilization.

Break in the dialogues between duality breaks the cycle of human civilization. It may stop the continuation of human civilization. It is not in the favour of either the good or the evil. The entire civilization torn between good and evil is also torn between ‘the center’ and ‘the periphery’. The center and the periphery is as much universal and permanent as the good and evil in human world. There is the utmost need to maintain balance through peaceful dialogue between these manmade extremes for better future. Stretching human relations towards extremes is just like stretching human relations towards the East and the West or the West and the rest. We unnecessary support the stance of ‘superiority’ and ‘inferiority’. This is the high time that we must come together to develop dialogue peacefully to balance the relationship between the East and the West for the sake of mankind and humanity. In the world of dualities and extremes we do need to have tolerance and right understanding to exercise the Buddha’s middle path. It will be a real cultural diplomacy for better tomorrow in the new millennium.

## **NEW EXTREMES/DUALITIES OF MODERN CIVILIZATION**

What are those new dualities that we do need to balance in the nearest future? Let us have a look at this issue. Apart from those natural as well as universal form of extremes or

dualities between good and evil or male and female, or day and night, the modern civilization stands with more aggressive and violent manmade dualities in the world today. This world is absolutely torn between the East and the West. *In the Clash of Civilization* (1996), Samuel Huntington, categorically speaks of the same truth of emerging duality. He says:

“(i)n the emerging world, the relations between states and groups from different civilizations will not be close and will often be antagonistic. Yet some interciviliation relations are more conflict-prone than others. At the micro level, the most violent fault lines are between Islam and its Orthodox, Hindu, African, and Western Christian neighbours. At the macro level, the dominant division is between “the West and the Rest” with the most intense conflict occurring between Muslim and Asian societies on the one hand, and the West on the other. The dangerous clashes of the future are likely to arise from the interaction of Western arrogance, Islamic intolerance, and Sinic assertiveness.” (183).

The West has played a major role in controlling the direction of every other civilization. As a result of this control over the world civilization, the relation between the power and culture of the West and the power and culture of other civilizations is disturbed. Other civilizations gathered their cultural powers against the West. The sense of supremacy in the West itself challenged the rest to rethink over its cultural power. The flash of growing relative power of the other civilizations dims the appeal of Western culture. The non-Western peoples support their commitment to celebrate their indigenous cultures. Such sense of commitment to indigenous culture may widen the fissures between the East and the West.

The universal aspirations of Western civilization, the declining relative power of the West, and the increasing cultural assertiveness of other civilizations ensure difficult relations between the West and the rest. This is one of the truths of modern world civilization. It does not mean that the tension between the West and the rest cannot be eased at all. To visualize that the tension between the East and the West is eased, we will have to level the difference between these two worlds. It is possible only when we exchange/share culture and ideas amicably between the West and the rest. What is good in the West needs to be welcomed by the rest and vice versa. “The importance of one identity need not obliterate the importance of others” (Amartya Sen, 19). Western faith in “free markets, individualism, human rights, limited government, value of democracy, the rule of law” (*Ibid.*) has to be incorporated in the indigenous moral values and culture of the rest in the interest of mankind. The stance of cultural hegemony of either the West or the rest to sustain its supremacy has to be balanced with better understanding of human civilization. For this the equality of every individual and every nation is to be celebrated despite its different castes and different cultures. To a certain extent science may help us understand human civilization with the theory of evolution of human species. The scientist like Theodosius Dobzanski advocates that “Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution” (*Sakal*: 17<sup>th</sup> April 2010, p. 6). It is true. It answers the question “How is the world?” but it is the Buddha’s outlook towards life (encapsulated in middle path) that shows us a way for “How to survive in the world” of extremes.

Thinking of the divisions of civilizations in the East and the West, Samuel Huntington draws a conclusion that the remaking of world order is possible. Amartya Sen, on the contrary draws different conclusion and rejects the idea of Samuel Huntington. Amartya Sen takes a very pragmatic and factual approach to human world and rejects the Utopian or fictitious views of life. He rejects the life in 'ivory tower' which seems to be full of bliss and peace. He criticizes such understanding.

The noble and elevating search for amity among people seen as amity between civilizations speedily reduces many-sided human beings into one dimension each and muzzle the variety of involvements that have provided rich and diverse grounds for cross-border interactions over many centuries, including the arts, literature, science, mathematics, games trade politics and other arenas of shared human interest. ( p. 12)

He also condemns an ideal pursuit of global peace. In his mind such an ideal pursuit is based on an "illusory understanding of the world of human beings (*Ibid.*) . He thinks that it is a cultural politics of those theorist " who like to divide up the world population into civilizational categories....The limitations of such civilization-based thinking can prove to be just as treacherous for programmes of " dialogue among civilizations as they are for theories of a clash of civilizations" (*Ibid.*) He believes in dualities/ extremes to accept the reality of life. He therefore could advocate his views on balancing economy of the haves and have-nots. He asked the government and other ruling institutions in the developing countries to utilize the economic resources for the uplift and betterment of the marginalized. He believes that the betterment of the marginalized can support the ruling class to control the violence/ class-war between the haves and have-nots and also help it maintain the balanced relationship in society. Of course, it will not completely suture the fissures between the haves and have-nots but at least will ease the tension between them.

## **MODERN CIVILIZATION & THE MIDDLE PATH**

The duality of modern civilization is center around the violence at global level. It therefore needs to be silenced with special efforts of international organization like UNO and the NGOs working to better the world through its cultural programmes. Achievement of complete silence in modern civilization is beyond imagination since our life is fraught with duality. However, it is within the reach of mankind to locate a turning point which will keep the balance between the violence and silence at local as well as global levels. To balance relationship between violence and silence, different nationalities should work together. Harping on simply multiculturalism is not enough. We have many more incidents of ethnic violence in the East and the West—It may be either in Canada or in Australia or in the United Kingdom or in the USA.

Apart from ethnic problem/violence, the violence triggered by terrorism is the worst part of violence in human civilization. It is to be handled very diplomatically for better tomorrow. Prof. Randall Law in his introduction to his book on *Terrorism* ( 2009) writes:

Terrorism is as old as human civilization...and as new as this morning's headlines. For some, it seems obvious that individuals and organizations have used terrorism for millennia, while others insist real terrorism has only been around for decades. Both camps are right-up to a point. The weapons, methods, and goals of terrorists constantly change, but core features have remained since earliest times (1).

Almost every nation is affected with violence by one way or the other. It is said that its locus is centred around Asian countries. But every nation and state is also having the locus of violence and terror in visible as well as in invisible forms. The *raison detre* of violence in different countries may be different. India is terrorized by the internal as well as external terrorism. Indian power thinks to have proper dialogue with Pakistan to solve the issue of border terrorism but does not think in the same manner while fighting against internal violence of Naxalites and Maoists. It intends to fight against Naxalites, and Maoists with green-hunt (Special military squad or police force against the Naxalites) which is not an appropriate way to approach the problem of internal violence. It is true to say that the 'diamonds cuts diamond'. The scientific outlook to de-poison human body with the poison also may be true. But this wisdom does not help in the process of destroying violence or terror with violence. Injection with the balanced quantity of poison is required to de-poisoning human body. The injection with excessive dose of poison may result in the death of human being. Hence, the balance between the duality is a must for the survival of human civilization. The use of force to fight against the violence/terror will generate more violence and other innumerable problems in human world. It implies a truth that evil is to be controlled and not to be destroyed.

Growing misunderstanding towards violence/terrorism speaks about the lack of proper cultural diplomacy. What is wrong with us today is that we do not properly diagnose malady and ailments of modern civilization and prescribe proper medication which may cure the recent ailments. The problem of internal violence is as much misunderstood by the ruling ministry of India as George Bush who had declared the "War against Terrorism after the attack of 11<sup>th</sup> September on WTO without knowing the intention or logic of Terrorists. Violence cannot be controlled with violence. The statement made by Timothy Roemer at Pune after the end of the case of terrorism (Mumbai attack of 26<sup>th</sup> November by Ajmal Kasab) in Mumbai in the month of May 2010 is disappointing. He says: "There is a need to root out the terrorism and violence in the world. And it is a primary responsibility of both of us—India and USA." (*Sakal*: p. 6, ) Thinking of Pak's approach towards terrorism Hilary Clinton also harps on the same litany which is absolutely wrong (*Sakal*: p. 2). It speaks about the lack of proper understanding of the issue/problem of violence and terrorism. They are forgetting the American conscience articulated by their own laureates like Hawthorne and Steinbeck. Violence generates only violence. It needs to be controlled the way Buddha had controlled the violence in Angulimala, one who also was one of the most dangerous terrorists of the time of Lord Buddha.

After the division of Russia, USA assumed the role of Big-brother. It holds the rein of global politics and international relations. Against the backdrop of the eleventh September and the twenty-six November it planned a diplomacy to fight against the violence all over the world. But it must take a very fare approach towards Asian

countries. It should not be biased against India/Pak or AF/Pak policy. Several comments passed by Hillary Clinton on Pak's approach towards terrorism is in fact the matter of serious consideration. It must know that there is a need to maintain balance between Af/Pak and India/Pak policy. Peaceful relations in this triangle would definitely contribute to have peace in the world. Pak fights against those terrorist who disturb Pak and not those terrorist who disturb either Afghanistan or India. Terrorist is after all terrorist. The religion of terrorists is violence and they trigger violence without any discrimination in Pakistan or in India ; in the United States or in the United Kingdom or elsewhere in the world.

President Obama's policy towards Pak seems to be rather different. Speech, he delivered in one of the Egyptian universities, was one of the ways of maintaining balance between Islamic and western World of Christianity. It is not the responsibility of Big-brother only. Every state and nation should come forward to balance relations between different cultures of the different civilizations. The war between Islamic and Western World of Christianity, is just like an ongoing war between good and evil. Hence, it needs to be handled very diplomatically so that the balance between this duality is not lost .

Dr. Ambedkar fought against the Hinduism while redefining the existence of the downtrodden and the marginalized in Indian civilization. He did it very peacefully. He redefined the identity of marginalized society through their peaceful conversion to Buddhism. Terry Pilchick appreciates the approach of Ambedkar towards the issue of casteism/chaturvarna in Indian civilization which exists due to the existence of the divisions of mankind. He appreciates Ambedkar's way of fighting war against Hinduism in general and Brahmanism in particular.

In the 1940's and 50's Bhimrao Ramaji Ambedkar—champion of India's sixty million 'untouchables'—could have launched a violent struggle for freedom. Instead, he asked his people to find dignity, strength, and prosperity by converting to Buddhism

The struggle between the West and the rest will be going on like the battle between the good and evil. What is within our reach is that we can have balanced approached towards the duality between the East and the West. The East need not hate the West and vice versa for the sake of supremacy over the rest of the world. It must try to come to the level of the West and vice versa in the respectful manner. "Asian and Islamic countries looking for shortcuts to balance the west militarily" (Huntington, 184) is absolutely wrong. It will ensure difficult relations between the East and the rest . To handle the burning problem of cultural identity in the light of religious fundamentalism which ignites terrible violence in East and West, the leaders of the world do need the Buddha's middle path. It will help us maintain balance between duality based on cultural differences in modern civilization.

## **SUMMING-UP**

It maybe either the local problem between two people of the same culture or two different cultures; it may be either the internal violence or external violence; it may be

either the international relations or global interrelations, it is the balance which constructs the essence of life. It must be maintained in different cultures to see the better tomorrow for better world. Mahabharata is not just an Indian epic. It is also a powerful metaphor of human civilization centred around moral dualities. The common man also can experience those moral dualities in Mahabharata. Its civilization does not expect the life of complete morality. Because such complete moral life may lead to totalitarian or dictatorial civilization. The case of modern civilization is not different from the period of Mahabharata civilization. We need not expect the world of complete silence or peaceful relations between the East and the West. What we do need today is that the balanced relations between these two cultural boundaries. There is therefore a need of the system which may celebrate the dignity of human life with a fair approach to accepting mankind with all its negative and positive pulls. It will help us envision human civilization as a whole. It is not very difficult if we exercise the spirit of balancing duality. Hope every individual and every nation will adopt the way of balancing duality as the way of cultural diplomacy which can help mankind to welcome human civilization as a whole in the new century and new millennium.

## REFERENCES:

- Halliwell, Martin & Mousley, Andy (eds.2003). *Critical Humanism: Humanist/Anti[Humanist Dialogues]*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural\\_Diplomacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_Diplomacy)
- Humphreys, Christmas. (1969). *The Buddhist Way of Life*. England: George Allen & Unwin.
- Huntington, S.P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilization*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- Law, Randall D. (2009). *Terrorism: A History*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mackenzie, Donald A. (1985). *India: Myths & Legends*, London: Bracken Books.
- Pilchick, Terry. (1988). *Jaibhim: Dispatches from a Peaceful Revolution*. Glasgow: Windhorse Publications.
- Sakal*, May 11, 2010, Nagpur Edition ,Maharashtra (India)
- \_\_\_\_\_, April 17, 2010 , Nagpur Edition, Maharashtra (India)
- Sen, Amartya. . (2006). *Identity and Violence*. England: Penguin Books.
- Smith, Mark J. (rpt. 2002). *Culture: Reinventing the Social Sciences*. Mumbai: Viva Books.
- Snelling, John. (1987). *The Buddhist Handbook*. London: Rider.
- Steinbeck, John. (1952). *East of Eden*. London: Pan Books Limited.
- Whitman, Walt. (rpt. 1973). *Leaves of Grass*. ed. by Sculley Bradley. New Delhi: Prentice Hall Ltd..