Environment and Spirituality

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The environment is the aggregate of surrounding things, conditions, or influences, especially as affecting the existence or development of some one or some thing. Spirituality is the quality of fact of being spiritual. Spirit is the principle of conscious life; the vital principle in man, animating the body or mediating between body and mind. The spirit, we can say, is the vertical dimension of oneness in life experiences and the environment is the horizontal manifestation of the “any.” The verticalization of the horizontal world of environment with a higher value impregnation from the vantage point of one’s own Self or spirit within can make one’s own environment more harmonious and beautiful to live peacefully.

We happen to exist in this environment like an intra-uterine foetus lies in the womb of mother. All creations are getting nourished from the five elementals in nature such as earth, water, fire, air, and space. When we live in this world, we occupy a space. Because of a narrow vision about our environment we have technologically and “scientifically” misused our natural resources not only out of need, but also out of greed. From many parts of the world we started hearing about the damage made by pollution from the early 1970s.

From an unknown past, different varieties of living and non-living things manifested in this world, existed for a particular period of time, and then dissolved back into the five elements. What is true about this world is its changefulness.
All manifestations also carry along with them a correlating counterpart like the two sides of a coin. Male has its counterpart in the female. At the level of energy there are the dual functions of expansion and contraction in the pulsation of the heart. The human experience also carries its own duality of happiness and sorrow. In this changing world with contradictions, we are destined to identify with a changing form and a changeless name. But this temporary, existential identity also has a vertical, non-changing substratum as its basis. This eternal permanent existence is knowledge through and through, which is to be understood through deep pondering. The enquirer has to use the belief aspect of knowing as in the case of religion and our rational questioning capacity like a modern scientist. One has to probe the one and the many at the same time by a dialectical way of higher reasoning. The contradiction of one and many is to be transcended inclusively and the paradox is to be resolved in one’s own heart in this life itself.

Although the experience of this existence is beyond any separation, when we try to probe and know the subtle realms of it, we unknowingly make a division of the knower and the known in the usual way of knowing. This relativistic knowledge was communicated through the word symbols as material science to others. There is another way approaching this one knowledge basis without making a break, by correcting this duality in our knowledge with the help of intuition. This corrective way of taking one to the level of higher wisdom is the secret in the spiritual literatures of humanity. This science of wisdom is called secret only because it is very difficult to know and understand. Contemplation is needed to identify with this corrective force within us which is non-dual knowledge.

Dualistic knowledge as well as non-dual knowledge has a common, neutral source in our consciousness. The dual
knowledge helps us to understand the specific facets of truth with certitude. This has brought different specialties in the arena of modern science with its application as technology and its innovations for the last three hundred years. The use or misuse of technology that affects our environment through pollution or overuse of natural resources are to be tackled at the individual level by an overall value emanating from the integrated vision of the absolute truth.

Belief in the “oneness” or “sameness” of reality is to be contemplated. This oneness or sameness can be seen to be the basis for its variegated manifestations. A dialectical approach to the paradoxes in life is the secret methodology proper to this value realm. Knowledge and its discourse are thus transcended through reflexive investigation of the inner reaches of inner space. The spiritual person helps others to get clarity about the secrets behind life and our environment. More than knowing, an identification with the light within is to be practiced so that our mind can start merging in the luminosity of peace and silence. Knowledge has its own source which is referred to as “light” in the scriptural texts. The light within is to be continuously contemplated as a neutral witness in one’s life in order to overcome the sufferings inherent in the dual experiences of life.

This core light of ours also carries the unchanging laws that operate in this universe. A spectrum of values from food to freedom is to be identified in a vertical, ladder-like order from the omega to the alpha. A hierarchy of values is to be discerned with clarity of vision through intense study of the problems we are facing like global warming. The Self or the highest Value in life is to be identified in the Core of one’s own consciousness. The Kingdom of Heaven or God is to be realized in the heart itself. From the neutral Self that knows no second, this Value
unfolds into the whole of the experiencing world of the knower and known. The duality of knower and known is to be transcended by an intuitive understanding with the help of belief. There are unchanging laws that operate in consciousness. They pervade the manifestations of consciousness which we take to be our inner “world” and outer “cosmos.” However, at no time is the purity of consciousness affected by the apparent changefulness it silently witnesses.

A potent factor which is not different from it is the cause for the changes happening in True Self. The possibility of all errors in one’s life has its source in this power which is like the shade of a lighted lamp. This power carries a dark and a light aspect. The pure Self is like a mirror reflecting the images on it and at the same time no residue of any image is left behind. Thus, the knower of the Self will become the knower of all. One has to find permanent peace within by identifying all without a second in one’s own self. Fear will go from the mind when one can identify with an absolute value without an “other.” The concept of “other” makes one afraid of a “second.” A spiritually perfect person will behave as an absolutist in his or her outlook without seeing the relativistic world around as the “other.”

We can see three realms in absolute knowledge: existence, subsistence or knowledge, and value or the purpose in life. This understanding can provide an overall norm for living the truth in total. These three realms of experiencing, knowing, and enjoying are lived usually in a local environment or a relative world of limited existence in the transactions of everyday life. A value addition through a verticalized process of punitive understanding gives a more integrated vision of environment. It is in our day-to-day life that we are to work out
our spiritual progress. The resulting unitive experience will be of oneness without a second.

Belief in the one basic truth will lead the experience of the sameness of all manifestations as a wonder and mystery of life. With this integrated vision in mind, we can probe the ordinary realm of our immediate environment with our intellect which carries the power for dialectical reasoning. Out of all creation, only human beings carry this unique feature of dialectical reasoning in them. Thus, an integrated vision of life and environment includes an absolute realm of contemplating the “one” through belief and a relative realm for intellectual probing with linear thinking to see cause-effect relations. The meeting point of these two dimensions is the neutral source of everyday cyclical experiences in the wakeful, dream and sleep.

Silence and compassion are the respective applications of the wisdom of one and many in life. We can be compassionate in our everyday actions by contemplating and identifying ourself as the silence-filled ocean of immortal bliss. The more we silently contemplate, the more clarity comes to us to help us deal with the environmental problems facing us.

The variety of life forms such as plants, animals, and micro organisms are dependent on each other in various ways. They are continuously changing with changing external factors and internal conditions. The loss of biodiversity will impact all life forms and in particular, human beings. Each person needs the wisdom to conserve biodiversity in his/her environment for the survival of the living world.