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INTRODUCTION

It is right to say that the present age is an understanding of human relations. The world has found itself as one body. But physical unity and economic interdependence are not by themselves sufficient to create a universal human community, a sense of personal relations among men is needed. Although the Upanishads are the basic and original sources of the Veda-ic philosophy of Swami Vivekananda, their contents are not sufficiently known even to many. The profundity, simplicity and universality make them great treasure houses of thought.

Swami Vivekananda declares clearly the source of 'strength' that is taught in the Upanishads is neither the body nor the mind and the intellect. All of these can be strong but the real strength, the real power, is in the spirit; the center of pure consciousness that every one of us really is. That unitary consciousness is the source of all power, goodness, purity and strength.

The only way to overcome disintegration is through unification. The only way to overcome disconnection is through re-establishing connections. And that is what we all try to do, consciously or unconsciously. There are many different ways to connect with others and to stay connected. Today we are likely to think at once of devices such as telephones, emails, cyber chat rooms, video conferences, or the old-fashioned methods.

Apart from all these ways in which something actually needs to be done in order to establish, affirm and sustain contacts, there is one truth that often remains obscure. And it is simply this: we are already connected to everyone and everything through a web of relations (sambandha).

Unfortunately, the unitary consciousness does not seem to be 'unitary' any longer. Something seems to have happened to it, and since we have no idea what that something is, we simply call it maya, which is another way of saying 'we don't know what really happened to it.' We know its result though, as it is a part of our daily experience. From the time we wake up till the time we fall asleep, and then even in our dreams, we experience a world that is fragmented, a world that is divided in every possible way. Worse, most of the fragments are constantly at odds with one another. The peace and bliss that we read about in scriptures are nowhere to be seen. What little peace and bliss we do experience at present is pathetically fragile and short lived. What is, alas, not fragile and short lived is our anxiety triggered by guilt and condemnation, doubt and meaninglessness, disease and death. The more divided the world becomes, the more we lose sight of the peace and joy that we seek.

Relations can be of various kinds. There is, for instance, the relation between a part and the whole (amsa - amshu) that is how each of us is related to the world. The world is the whole and each of us is a part belonging to that whole. Our relations to our country, our culture, our religion, oftentimes belong to this whole/part category. Then there is the relation between different parts of the same whole: that is how everyone and everything in this world is related to one another. As human beings, or as fellow citizens of a country or fellow members of an organization, we see one another as parts of a larger whole. This kind of relation is further fortified by the fact that each and everything in the world is dependent on one another. Some relations last a lifetime while some
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are more temporary. Some relations affect us deeply while some touch us merely on the surface. Some relations bring joy while some bring pain. Some relations are mutually fulfilling while some are disastrous.

No matter what the nature of relation is, though, it cannot be denied that every relation has its limitations. A relation connects us to others, but that connection is seldom total. A relation is like a bridge: as a bridge is can connect two entities, but that does not make the two entities one. No matter how strong the bridge, the danger of its breaking down can never be ruled out. That is why no relation can be lastingly fulfilling unless it somehow leads to unity. So long as there are at least two, the possibility of fear, anger, hatred, and disappointment is always present. Presently we experience the absence of all these only in deep sleep (sushupti), a state in which there is no diversity; no duality. If we 'relation' exists in that state, it can only be called unity.

Consciously or uncounsciously, we all seek unity. The process of globalization is a process that is trying to reach toward some kind of unity, or at least integration, on our tiny planet. All social units, beginning with the family, hold unity as a worthy goal. Unity is seen as a precursor and prerequisite to harmony, peace and joy. At the interpersonal level, the efforts to reach unity occur at various levels. While the experience itself may be unitary, it is never and seldom totally fulfilling. It never fully satisfies the need for unity and often accentuates the duality once the experience is over.

Unity can be achieved on the emotional plane as well. While this is more lasting than the physical variety, it is far from permanent, because emotions like all functions of the mind are uncertain and eminently changeable. Then there is the unity that is experienced at the intellectual level, but this also has its limitations and pitfalls, as the intellect can be
swayed either way through reason. It is only at the spiritual level that the 'relation' transcends the inherent duality and attains irrevocable unity. 'Attains' is not an accurate word to describe what happens. At the spiritual level, duality is found to be an illusion and the ever existing unity is discovered.

UPANISHADS:

The Upanishads never tire of telling us that pure consciousness (chith) is all that exists. There is nothing else other than pure consciousness. Why do we need the adjective 'pure' to qualify the word 'consciousness'? Simply because we usually use the word 'consciousness' in relation to something or someone. There is always an object involved when we use the words 'conscious' or 'consciousness'. In contrast, pure consciousness points to a state when there is no object. There is simply the subject. Furthermore, that subject cannot be said to be conscious, it is consciousness itself. It is that objectless consciousness that is meant by the phrase 'pure consciousness'. When it is identified with an individual, it is called Atman. When it is identified with nothing in particular, it is called Brahma. Brahma and Atman are two words but they refer to the same one reality, pure consciousness. It is only pure consciousness that is 'spiritual'. Everything else in this universe is a product of matter and hence 'material'.

Establishing a spiritual relation with others involves making effort to see oneself as spirit and seeing others as spirit as well. While this may seem to be a two step process, the two steps are, in fact, connected. How we see others is intrinsically connected with how we see ourselves. Our concept of the world and of everyone and everything in it is directly related to our concept of ourselves.

If I want to see everyone as children of God, I must begin by seeing myself as a child of God. Similarly, if I want to see others as spirit, I must begin by seeing myself as spirit. My efforts to see everyone as spirit will succeed only so far as my efforts to see myself as spirit succeed. What does seeing myself as spirit really involve? Simply, it means that through every thought, word and action, my identity as spirit must shine forth. Every thought that makes me feel I am anything other than spirit must be avoided. Every word that intensifies my wrong identification with the body and the senses must be avoided. Every action that makes me forget my spirit nature must be avoided. In positive terms it means I must consciously cultivate thoughts, use words, and do actions that strengthen my spirit identity and loosen

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**Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams**

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- Segregate dry and wet waste materials and put in separate dustbins. Always make the surroundings clean.
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- Don't spit or throw waste materials on roads.
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the iron grip that the body, mind, and senses and the ego that towers over them all have over me.

Devotees try to achieve this through selfless service, spiritual study, prayer, worship, japa and meditation. All human relations that are forged in and through the awareness of the spirit that pervades every bit of the universe—indeed, spirit is all that really exists not only connect everyone but also unite everyone, transcending all diversity and distinctions which are the primary cause of all problems in the world. Diversity is not destroyed, but because one sees the underlying unity, the diversity becomes a source of joy instead of suspicion, fear and dissension.

The relations cultivated by those who are spiritually enlightened are models that the rest of us can emulate. In recent times, Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi have provided several templates through not only their relations with each other but also the way they related to their relatives, friends and disciples. We can see how human relations can be endlessly enriching and fulfilling if they derive strength from its real source within us, the Atman. Any other kind of relation labours under severe limitations.

Scriptures of world religions offer useful insights into the subject of human relations and the Upanishads have made a significant contribution in that field. Harmony and peace, both collective and individual, depend on rock solid, healthy and strong relations. The wisdom of the Upanishads shows us a way to achieve just that.

Thus Swamy Vivekananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Sri Sarada Devi contributed to the society the understanding of human relations in the light of Upanishads.