Concept of Planetary Citizenship in the Scholarly Indian Tradition
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Abstract: Today the descendants of the planet are living in a world of atrocious intolerance and disgusting covetousness. The nations of the world are still competing for spending money on armament, without considering basic needs of humans. A materialistic culture is prevailing all over the world hence the deterioration of human values is a natural phenomenon. For the wellness of the world and humans themselves, the planet needs a single community of Planetary citizens, enclosing all humans who live with extreme international cooperation. The context demands a culturally and environmentally inclusive global vision of Planetary Citizenship which is the key factor of peaceful coexistence. Educating people with this new world view is a hot topic under discussion all over the world. Osler (2002) clarifies that education for living together in an interdependent world is not an optional extra, but an essential foundation. Inculcating a sense of Planetary citizenship can play a dominant role in developing a culture of tolerance and peace. The earliest reference of the concept of Planetary Citizenship can be traced back to the Epics, Vedas, Upanishads and other literatures of India since between seventh and fifth century. Phrases like ‘Vasudhaiva Kudumbakam’ from Mahopanishad (6, 71-73) and Hitopadesa, which encompasses the concept of Planetary Citizenship, has been very popular since the fifth century in Indian tradition and the people of the country are familiar with that ideology from the remote past itself. Hence the concept of Planetary Citizenship traces its roots in Ancient Indian Philosophy. Presently the study reviews Indian scriptures to diagnose its contribution towards the culture of Planetary Citizenship and creating a new era of peace and prosperity.

Keywords: Planetary Citizenship, Indian Tradition, Vasudhaiva Kudumbakam, Planetary Citizenship Education

Introduction

Today the descendants of the planet are living in a world of atrocious intolerance and disgusting covetousness. The nations of the world are still competing for spending money on armament, without considering basic needs of humans. A materialistic culture is prevailing all over the world hence the deterioration of human values is a natural phenomenon. For the wellness of the world and humans themselves, the planet needs a single community of Global citizens, enclosing all humans who live with extreme international cooperation. Global citizenship is a contested concept in scholarly discourse and there are multiple interpretations of what it means to be a global citizen. Some have called global citizenship ‘citizenship beyond borders’, or ‘citizenship beyond the nation or state’. Others have noted that ‘cosmopolitanism,’ as a term, may be broader and more inclusive than global citizenship, while still others opt for ‘planetary citizenship’, focusing on the global community’s responsibility to preserve the planet Earth [1].

The context demands a culturally and environmentally inclusive global vision of planetary citizenship which is the key factor of peaceful coexistence. It is important that young people are informed about the world in which they live and are provided with the skills to enable them to be active citizens and to understand how they can shape their own futures and make a difference [2]. Osler [2] clarifies that Education for living together in an interdependent world is not an optional extra, but an essential foundation. Inculcating a sense of planetary citizenship can play a dominant role in developing a culture of tolerance and peace.

The Planetary citizenship is guaranteed not by a state but ensured by the humanity of beings. This means everyone is responsible to the rest of humanity and not the state or nation to which they belong. It is marketed by an understanding of global interconnectedness and a commitment to the collective
good [3]. Planetary citizenship refers more to a sense of belongingness to a broader community and common humanity, promoting a global gaze that links the local to the Planetary and the national to the international. World mindedness is no longer a luxury but a necessity for survival in the new millennium. Encountering diverse viewpoints and perspectives engenders, too, a richer understanding of self [4]. It is also a way of understanding acting and relating oneself to others and the environment in space and in time, based on universal values, through respect for diversity and pluralism. In this context, each individual’s life has implications in day to day decisions that connect the global with the local and vice versa [1]. The countries of the planet need an extremely open climate regarding political, cultural, religious and social aspects for conceiving all kinds of universal values which is crucial for developing a planetary perspective. The Governments may embody these concepts in their policy documents to establish a culture of peaceful coexistence.

This is an era of crisis i.e. crisis of poverty, educational crisis, economic crisis, crisis of environmental degradation, cultural crisis and crisis of human values. Ultimately the world is facing the Crisis of Peace and peaceful co-existence [5]. Here the crisis of human values is the top most issue causing all exasperations in the world. For that the world is in need of a strong and credible substratum of values. Explicitly the Indian doctrine can play a significant role here. From very beginning of the Indian civilization it possesses a continuous and esteemed traditional history prominently incorporating the traditional ethos. The tradition and culture of India is one of the oldest considering the whole world and is enough prosperous and privileged to lead the world with its traditional values to a better tomorrow. The richness of its culture and tradition is sufficient to create a prestigious world population. Most of the Indian ethos found its roots in the ancient scriptures of India like Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Bhagavad Gita, Manusmruthi, Arthasasthra etc.

The roots of discussions on the topic Planetary citizenship, which is a widely accepted one today throughout the world, traces in ancient Indian scriptures. Indian scriptures possess a very old tradition which is more than 3500 years old. It embodies a hand full of mantras, adages and hymns which propagates the concept of Planetary citizenship. This is an attempt from the part of investigators to review the Indian scriptures to find out the concepts which contribute towards the idea of Planetary citizenship. The paper attempts to establish the relevance of certain Indian ethos in the practice of Planetary citizenship.

**Contribution of Indian Scriptures towards the Concept of Planetary Citizenship**

The values, philosophy thoughts and ethics of India have great respect for all the living things in the world. It pours reverence towards and adores the non-living things which are essential for life and sustainable development of the Planet. It believes that all that is valuable has come from the ocean, that the Himalayas are the abode of Siva, that the Ganga’s water purifies everything, that the Ganga is a mother for the teeming millions even today, that the cow is sacred, all these have philosophical and scientific bases. God has come down to earth in animal forms too, like fish, boar, half-lion and half-human. Ganesa, who is worshiped all over India, is half elephant and half human. Almost all gods and goddesses have animals as their vahan (vehicles). Even the snake deserves our protection and reverence. Trees have received very special consideration, for they are the source of fruits, medicines and oxygen. Concepts of kalpavriksha, the tree which gives everything, and of kamadhenu, the cow which fulfills all desires, represent our values towards nature and life in general [6].

It tries to reach out all unheard voice of which are struggling all over the world due to the anthropocentric nature of unsustainable development. There is a long lasting acceptance for Indian values worldwide because of its credibility. Hence here presents certain adages and hymns of Indian tradition which are in a close connection with the planetary vision. These are also great reminders of auspicious treasure of knowledge and tradition shared by ancestral scholars.

**Sarve Bhadrani Pasyantu Ma Kaschid Dukhhabhag bhavet**

This adage is extracted from the prayer composed by Adi Sankara and it means ‘May all experience prosperity, may none suffer’. It expresses an attitude a human may possess while living in this mundane world. He may show empathy and care towards his co beings, he may pray for the wellbeing of all Planet. The complete verse is like,

‘Om sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu nira-maya-ah;
sarve bhadrani pashyantu ma-kaschit dukha-bhakkhavet
Om, shantih, shantih, shantih’

Oh Lord, may all [entire mankind] be happy; May all be healthy; May all experience prosperity; May none (in the world) suffer. May peace, peace, peace be unto us and all the beings of the world. Indian culture is overwhelmed with care and reverence to all beings. It encourages its people to share such a world view in
which all beseech the deity for the world to be healthy and prosperous and with peace.

**Tasya Bhasa Sarvamidham vibhati**

This line is adopted from the Kata Upanishad, Chapter 2, Canto 2 and Verse 15. The literal meaning of the adage is ‘all things in this world are a display of his brilliant radiant power’. As it is a hymn it adores the God or the power which created the Universe. The complete verse is given below

‘Na tatra suryo bhaati na chandratarakam nema vidyuto bhaanti kutoyamagnihi
Tameva bhaantamanubhaati sarva tasya bhasa sarvamidham vibhati’

Which means the sun, the moon, the numerous stars or the fire cannot illuminate lightning. When he shines everything shines after him. All things in this world are a display of his brilliant radiant power. In this hymn though it invoke the esteem power it carries an idea of unity. The whole world is created by a single radiant power and all belong to a single father and hence to a single family of the Planet.

**Athithi Devo Bhavah**

This adage means ‘Treat your guest as god’. It is from Taittiriya Upanishad, Chapter 11, and Verse 2. The complete verse is like,

Deva pithrukaryabhyam na
pramadhitvayam; mathru devo bhavah;
Pithru devo bhavah; Aacharya devo bhavah; Athithi devo bhavah;
Yaanyanavadyaani k armaani; thani sevithavyani; no itharani;
Yaanyasmakam sucharitithani; thani thvayopasyani;

Which means one should not neglect one’s duties to the gods and ancestors. Treat your mother as god. Treat your father as god. Treat your teacher as god. Treat your guest as god. Whatever deeds are faultless; these are to be performed – not by others. Whatever good works have been performed by us, those should be performed by you – not by others. The value that may adopt from this verse is that; do teach the young generation to respect all beings around them. A generation who taught and brought up with this culture can’t lead an anti-social and anti-humanistic life. In other hand they will try to create and spread a vision of universal brotherhood by giving and taking respect from all over the world. They will take initiative to create a world family.

**Aa no bhadrah krutavo yantu Vishwato**

It means let noble thoughts come to our minds from all over. It is taken from Rigveda, Mandala 1-89.

Aa no bhadrah krutavo yantu Vishwato” ‘dabdhaso aparitasa udbhidaha.
Devana yatha sadam id vrdhe asann aprayuvo rakshitaharo dive-dive

Which means, May noble thoughts come to us from every side, never deceived, unhindered and victorious, that the gods ever may be with us for our gain, our guardians day by day unceasing in their care. This is a significant quality of a planetary citizen. A world citizen may be opening minded to understand and approve the thoughts and culture of all others in the world. The verse reminds all too wide open their minds to receive and conceive the noble thoughts and rituals of others to create a better world of peaceful coexistence.

**Lokah Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu**

It means May all beings everywhere be happy and free. This phrase is a mangala manthra often recited after a pooja or religious ceremony. Most of the Hindu rituals end with such a generic prayer and it is found in many vedic texts. The whole versa is

svasti praajabyaam paripaalayantar nynaayena margena mahim maheeshah.
gobramanebyah shubhamasthu nityam lokah samastha sukhrno bhavantu.
Om’ Shانتh; Shanthi; Shanthi.

Which means May there be wellbeing to the people; May the kings rule the earth along the right path; May the cattle and the Wise men have wellbeing forever; May all the beings in all the worlds become happy; Let there be peace, peace and peace be everywhere. The verse ensures Indian tradition lenience, encourages becoming more receptive. Everyone may consider and do something for the living beings on Earth. All beings need to be considered equal with equal consideration which is necessary for the sustainable way of life.

**Vasudhaiva kudumbakam**

This adge means the whole world is one big family. It is the loftiest vedanthic thought ever considered. It originates in the vedic scripture Maha Upanishad in chapter 6 and verse 72. It is the oldest of the Vaishnava Upanishads. The complete verse is like

Aayam Bhandurayam niti ganana laghu
udharacharithanam tu vasudhaiva kudumbakam.

Which means, May noble thoughts come to us from every side, never deceived, unhindered and victorious, that the gods ever may be with us for our gain, our guardians day by day unceasing in their care. This is a significant quality of a planetary citizen. A world citizen may be opening minded to understand and approve the thoughts and culture of all others in the world. The verse reminds all too wide open their minds to receive and conceive the noble thoughts and rituals of others to create a better world of peaceful coexistence.
Ayam nija paro vedi ganana lakhuchethasam. 
udhara charithanam tu vasudpaha 
kudumbakam.

It convey the meaning this is my own and that 
is a stranger is the description of a narrow minded 
person But to a generous learned man world is one big 
family [12]. This concept offers a loftiest sign of 
universalization. The adage is inscribed in stone on the 
wall of the Indian Parliament house and it is the foreign 
policy of Indian Government.

**Krinvanto Vishwam Aryam**

It means ‘Make the whole world noble’ it is 
adopted from Rigveda, Mandala 9, Sutra 63, Mantra 5. 
The complete verse is like,

Indhram vardhanto aputrah krinvanto rashwam 
aryam Apaghnanto aravnah

It means Increase your energies, make the 
whole world noble and destroy the evil ones. The verse 
proclaims all to destroy the evil things from the world. 
And to try to create a noble world. Humans need to 
destroy the evil boundaries among the nations and wars 
for materialistic achievements. They have to think and 
work for a more tolerant and peaceful single planetary 
family.

**Yatra Vishwam bhavatyeka nidam**

The meaning of the adage is ‘Where the world 
would become a single nest’. It is from Mahanarayana 
Upanishad, Chapter 2, Verse 3. the complete verse is 
Venastatpashyan vishwaa bhuvanaani 
vidvaan yatra vishwam bhavatyekanidam

Yasminnidam sam cha vi chaikam sa otah 
protashcha vibhuh prajaasu

Which means, He, the God, in whom this 
universe originates and into whom it is absorbed. He 
who exists as the thread connecting all created beings. 
The whole world act as a single nest for all earthlings 
created by the deity and the God act as a thread which 
connects all his creations. It expresses the noble thought 
again as all beings of the Planet belong to a single nest 
of God [8].

**CONCLUSION**

This is an age of rapid scientific and 
technological change; nobody can deny it as it is the 
need of time. But the world has ignored the realm of 
values in the intense search of material life. But this is 
the time where the world needs a rethinking. As 
children are the forerunners to Planetary citizens, to 
establish a culture of Planetary Vision they need to be 
address the global problems of poverty, hunger, 
illiteracy, inequity, violence and ecological crisis. The 
present educational approach has been a failure in this 
regard [9]. Now the stake holders, policy makers and 
educationists are busy with the deliberate planning of 
a new system of education giving prominence to the 
values running towards planetary vision, the Planetary 
Citizenship Education. The present educational system 
of the planet is designed for the agricultural era rather 
than for an instrumental world. This is the context to 
connect and leverage the expenditure and best practices 
to advance the global citizenship education for all 
students all over the world [10]. Discussions and 
debates are going on in this area to create an efficient 
curriculum which can create a compassionate 
civilization.

India, upholding the legacy of one of the oldest 
and richest tradition of the world can elegantly guide 
the endeavor of developing the sense of Planetary 
citizenship with her traditional values bequeathed from 
er her ancestors through scriptures. Though the reflections 
of the concept of world citizen can be traced at the end 
of 400 BC from Greece, the Indian tradition contributes 
more authentically the idea of Planetary Citizenship 
with the verses and hymns in her traditional scriptures. 
And the adage ‘vasudpaha Kudumbakam’ got wide 
acceptance throughout the world. Education is not a 
preparation for life. It is the life itself [11]. Hence a 
reorganization of the educational system from the 
elementary level has become a necessity. It may 
redesign with the hymns, adages, ethos and credos of 
Indian scholarly tradition rooted in Vedas, Upanishads, 
Bhagavad Gita, Puranas etc. The researchers and 
educationists have to contribute in this evolutionary 
movement for a new educational paradigm based on 
Indian Tradition. The study fosters the fact that a new 
educational endeavor valuing Indian tradition and 
literature can play magic in the world. It expects the 
budding blossoms may fill with the dews of traditional 
values which mold them into a planetary citizen.

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