



“The new horizons of the Economy of Communion”
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PANEL 5
ECONOMY OF COMMUNION
SYMBOL OF A NEW WORLD ORDER

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The world cannot experience true progress, peace and tranquillity unless societies torn by strife, conflicts and sense of mutual distrust and hatred are able to rise above the narrow selfish instincts and are able to bridge the ever widening gulf between the super-rich and depressed and poor. Sadly, there has been a very strong and rather unhealthy consumerist upsurge gaining strength with every passing decade and the privileges of the rich and disadvantages of the poor are being increasingly amplified and reinforced through a powerful process where wealth is getting concentrated in the hands of a few, nationwide ghettos of affluence gleaming behind iron-gates and the poor not able to afford even small one-roomed apartments. Such a two-tracked society, divided so sharply between rich winners and unfortunate losers is an unstable society. Against this backdrop, **Economy of Communion** offers a new ray of hope.

Individualistic paradigm, which is the cornerstone of the most economic theories of the day, has simply promoted self-aggrandisement, individualism and reckless craze for cornering huge profits at the expense of fellow beings. **Economy of Communion** projects try to overcome some of these deficiencies by imbining economic action and activity with a culture of sharing and giving and exhorting people to adopt this as a new way of life.

We in India believe that a society will be what its individuals are. If individuals are not able to shed their selfish instincts and rise above their petty self, societies will never be healthy and coherent.



The **Economy of Communion** movement has tried to address some of these serious economic problems and issues by promoting a spirit of love and mutual respect and extending the dynamics of inter-personal communion to business enterprises. Its message is to first finance business for creating wealth and then share it with customers, employees and associates and simultaneously aim at helping the dispossessed, needy and poor, which may provide a long term solution to the problems of poverty and inequity. However, I may like to pose a question! Whether by creating a few hundred new businesses, the message of sharing and love can best be spread amongst the different parts of the world? Can the desired goal be achieved without the involvement of like-minded groups, institutions and people all over. An excellent beginning has been made, but the task is stupendous and it requires not only commitment of a few but cooperation of millions and coordination amongst all like minded associations and groups globally, who aim at spreading the fruits of globalisation without in any way injuring and hurting the feelings and susceptibilities of the weak and meek.

There is an inherent contradiction between market economy and economy of communion; one simply aims at unbridled growth and interplay of market forces even at the expense of interest of the common-man whereas the noble spirit of your movement is to elevate the spirits of the lowly amongst the low by a spirit of camaraderie and mutual love. It is nice to learn that 797 enterprises of various dimensions have been set up in several parts of the world, which are integral part of economy of communion; they are not only promoting a new business culture but a new ethos of selfless love amongst members of the community. But looking to the quality of the challenge, far more concrete steps may be necessary to effectively tackle the problem.

In my humble opinion this conference needs to deliberate on the steps which are to be taken urgently and with all vigour to make it a mass movement of universal dimensions. May I have your indulgence to suggest a few steps for your kind consideration.



- (i) The movement should have a wider appeal. For this the organisational base should be strengthened and its ideals and goals should be widely publicized. People in various parts of the world need to be educated about the immense changes brought about by these 797 industrial parks to the lives of customers, suppliers and employees/managers and how they have been able to lend a helping hand to the needy of the neighbourhood. This will educate and motivate people to start new enterprises with the intention to help people all around and foster a spirit of brotherhood. Let the people of various nationalities have a feel of the enormous opportunities such ventures offer to create new employment opportunities as also lessons they teach in redistributing wealth in a harmonious manner.
- (ii) Large scale networking with like-minded organisations would help secure cooperation of thousands of organisations who are committed to the common cause; it would widen the horizons and spread the message on a global scale. Sharing of ideas and platforms with other organisations with interest in service to mankind would make a very vibrant and dynamic movement and enthuse social workers of under-developed-economies who are genuinely working to improve the lots of poor without much outside support and financial help.
- (iii) Prof. Bruni in one of his papers has made a beautiful point that the process of globalisation should not be allowed to transform the world into a large supermarket where the only form of human relationship is the economic one. Without adequate safeguards and corrective measures the process of globalisation can dehumanise the society. The philosophy of **communion** is the right antidote but let the high priests of globalisation have an appreciation of this! What is of immediate concern is to convince such economists, business leaders and international managers that to ensure a just order and balanced growth, technological advances and social priorities need to be harmonised. For this let your movement organise seminars, symposia



and conferences in important centres of the world and not only convince people but stimulate their thoughts to become active partners in the noble task of achieving the twin goals of economic growth and social justice.

- (iv) The best messengers of love and compassion, liberty and fraternity could be our children. There is an urgent need to instil in their minds how a new world could be created by spreading the message of love and universal brotherhood. Today's children due to immense exposure to TV and media are increasingly becoming market-friendly and consumerist in their approach. If proper educational programmes could be undertaken and literature distributed amongst children to develop a feeling of sharing with other children, it would go a long way in making them good citizens of the future having trust in each other. Similarly, they could be enthused to work for upholding the cultural traditions of the society, respecting the elders, helping the underprivileged and saving the trees and protecting the environment. Books/periodicals and magazines in different languages, short duration programmes and lectures by committed and dedicated workers can rekindle the spirits of our young who could be our best hope for safeguarding human and spiritual motivation and make it as a way of life right from the beginning.

Friends, this is a great movement. In the present market economy, poor have little global choice and hardly any platform to articulate their viewpoints. It is immensely gratifying that there is such a movement which has international appeal and is tirelessly working to replicate the experiment of Brazil to set up new business ventures with emphasis on love and service to poor as the ultimate motto.

Ladies and Gentlemen, India's ancient view of wisdom always deprecated excessive craving for material possessions. Our sages always spread the message of love, mutual respect and universal brotherhood. For them the entire world was one family (**Vasudeva**



Kutumbakkam) They not only preached for loving and caring of each human being but every living-being because each is the manifestation of the ultimate, i.e. that supreme being.

Lord Mahavir almost 2,600 years back laid great emphasis on self-restraint. Personal equanimity and social equity were the fundamental tenets of his teachings. Social discipline, tolerance and reciprocity were basic to his vision of a healthy social order.

Friends, let us unite in our efforts to achieve that lofty ideal of social equity. The course of history has been changed many a times by the dedicated efforts of a small band of enlightened persons who have been fired by an unquenchable thirst in their mission. However, the need of the hour is unity of purpose and sincerity of approach as conveyed by a great sage of Vedic era:

“Assemble, speak with one another,
let your minds be of one accord
May your prayer be common
common be your assembly,
common the mind, common the thoughts,
common be your aim, your hearts be united”

Before I conclude, let me acknowledge my gratitude to the organisers of this Round Table conference, who so graciously invited me and gave me an opportunity to share my views with all of you.

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