

*Lokarpan of **The Spirit of Tao – Glimpses of Noble Direction****

It gives me immense pleasure to be associated with *Lokarpan of **The Spirit of Tao – Glimpses of Noble Direction***, a book flowing from the pen of Narayana Guruji and the co-author, Padmaji.

Lokarpan is often used for book release ceremony. In the context of today's function, I would define *Lokarpan* as a sacred act by which a noble book authored by noble persons is being dedicated to the service of the society for its benefit. Participating in a function like this I am reminded of a stanza from a poem written by H.W. Long Fellow:

*Whenever a noble deed is wrought,
Whenever is spoken a noble thought,
Our hearts in glad surprise,
To higher levels rise.
Honour to those whose words and deeds
Thus help us in our daily needs.
And by their over flow,
Raise us from what is low.*

By this time, I have known Guruji for a little less than a decade. He is a scholarly person who had good education and by God's grace bestowed with the opportunity of providing leadership to several companies. He has authored several books wherein he has succeeded in blending the old and the new, the ancient and the modern, the spiritual values and the practical wisdom. Every creation by his pen is a piece of holistic Indian philosophy and culture, enabling the imbibing of our traditional values into worldly progress, prosperity and enrichment.

Padmaji's contributions to the *Spirit of Tao* have added value to the wisdom. Her contribution to the *Spirit of Tao* persuades me to say that she has the capacity to plunge into the ocean of wisdom, trace out the gems hidden, brush and polish them and convert the words of value into priceless pearls I did not have the privilege of meeting respected Padmaji earlier than today but my ears and eyes claim to have known her since before. From what Guruji told me about her, I have learnt that she has revived and edited the original draft version of 81 verses in *The Spirit of Tao* and integrated the verses, pictures, summary poems and punch lines and thereby she has converted the work of Narayana Guruji into an excellent wholesome work, which one would like to see, read and possess. I cannot describe her contribution better than by

* Speech delivered by Jus. R.C. Lahoti (Fr. CJI) on **13-02-2011** - the Book Release Function on "**The Spirit of Tao**" organized by Ahmedabad Management Association, Ahmedabad

borrowing her own poetic expression. This is how she has expressed her own feelings -

*Fingers moved, words poured down
Wisdom grew, thoughts flowed down.
But, it wasn't I who wrote a word
Not am I wise to understand a word.
It was 'He' who is my guiding light
Graced me with the spirit, vigour and might.
How then can I stand as an equal?
With 'Him' who is highest and unsurpassable.
He is simple, divine and neutral like the Sun
And like the Tao, he does all but, claims none*

This is the height of humility. He does all but claims none, she says. And, I join in the chorus to say – she does a lot but claims none.

Guruji has been initiated into the path of the spirituality by *Shrimad Bhagwad Gita*. In his writings he has liberally drawn on Vedas and Upanishads and then great books and teachings of almost all the religions of the world. It will not be an exaggeration to say that Guruji's writings lead the reader from 'humanity to divinity'¹ and enable unlocking the doors of 'gateways to self-realization'² By this time books written by Guruji have been published. His books are 'offerings'³ on the 'way to spirituality'⁴ Shri L. Rajagopalan⁵ calls Guruji as 'store-house of knowledge' who has studied various systems of philosophy.

How beautifully, the leadership and management Guru – Shri Suresh Pandit⁶ has summarized the book *Spirit of Tao* and its authors. He says, "I realized that the lives of Guruji and Padmaji are the Spirit of Tao. It is as if they have put their life philosophy in print."

What is **Tao**? There was a time in the history when great men and great souls were born in different regions of the earth. Lao Tzu was born in China in 571 B.C. Confucius was contemporary of Lao Tzu. It was almost at the same time when the *Buddha* and Lord *Mahavira* had descended on the soil of India and *Socrates* in Greece. The life story of Lao Tzu is hedged about with legend. It is said, for instance, that he spent eighty-one years in his mother's womb, and was thus considered old when he was born. Hence the name Lao Tzu, which literally means 'old sage'.

1,2,3,4 – *Humanity to Divinity*, *'Gateways to Self-realization'*, *'offerings'* and *'ways to spirituality'*, are titles of some of the books authored by Guruji.

⁵ A master of English language with enriched Vedic Cultural back ground .Director on board of several companies. Advisor to many organizations.

⁶ A mentor and respected Guru in the field of leadership and management development based on ethics, values and principles.

According to Taoist tradition, Lao Tzu was a minor government official who, in his later years, seeing the increasing corruption around him, decided to escape the world of men and move to the mountains in order to devote himself wholly to the Way.⁷ Arriving at the border of the province of Honan on the western frontier of China, and riding on an ox (as he is traditionally depicted in paintings and sculptures), Lao Tzu encountered a border official who not only happened to be a follower of Tao, but had seen in a vision that a great sage would be passing his way, in search of seclusion. Recognizing him, the official begged the sage to write down his teachings for the benefit of humanity before retiring to the wilderness. Lao Tzu agreed, and there and then he sat down and wrote out the 5000 Chinese ideograms⁸ (later organized into 81 verses) that constitute the Tao Te Ching. Then he continued on his way, never to be seen again.⁹

According to Osho, who, in my humble opinion, has been the greatest thinker, philosopher and orator of the 20th Century says that this small compilation of these 81 verses can be placed at the same high pedestal as the Gita, Upanishad, Dhammapad, or Bible. He says *Tao* is old and also new. It is old because it dates back to 2500 years. It is new because though old as belonging to in the long past, its message is yet to be heard and most needed to be heard in these times.

The Spirit of Tao is a book of values. 81 verses placed in 81 chapters, have each been given a title which is suggestive of one value. Each of the values is symbolically but suggestively explained not only in verses but also by drawing illustrations that the thoughts are set rolling and the reader is lost deeply into introspection. The journey inwards – the journey to self-realization- begins.

For instance take chapter 27 – ‘*Secret*’ (at page 55 of the book).

*Bad man, Good man are illusions two
Just appearances are these two
Bad man’s teacher Good man is
Good man’s job bad man is,
Integral perspective!*

It is indeed an open secret that the world is full of what is good and what is bad, both in characters as also in characteristics i.e. the personalities and also the persons. There are many a thing, many an experience, and many an incident which are neither good nor bad by themselves; it all depends on how we

⁷ *The Way* – which has later come to be known as *Taoism*

⁸ *Ideogram* = a symbol that is used in a writing system (for example Chinese) to represent the idea of a thing, rather than the sounds of a word (Oxford, Advanced Learner’s Dictionary)

⁹ The life story of *Lao Tzu* has been taken from ‘*A Treasury of Mystic Terms, Part-I : the Principles of Mysticism, Vol. I : The Universe of Spirituality*’, published by Science of the Soul Research Centre, p. 194

perceive them. **Tao** says bad and good are both illusions. Somebody criticizes or hurls abuses at me. There are two ways of looking at it. If I feel bad and feel hurt, then undoubtedly what has been done to me is bad. The man is my foe. But if I feel and realize that the man has pointed out to me my mistakes or shortcomings so that I can improve upon myself and be a better person in future then he is one who has obliged me, done good to me. He is my friend – a well wisher. The saint poet says –

बुरा जो देखन मैं चला बुरा न दीखा कोय।
जो दिल खोजा अपना मुझ सा बुरा न कोय।

This realization transforms our vision. We realise:

*There is so much good in the worst of us,
And so much worst in the best of us,
That it hardly behoves any of us,
To talk about the rest of us.*

Two short, but real life anecdotes.

(i) There used to be a great philosopher and saint who was also a revolutionary. He was pained to see the evils in which the world was engrossed. At the threshold of youth when he was full of energy and enthusiasm he took a vow – ‘*I will set right the whole world*’. The youth was lost and the world was there where it was, as it was. He thought that it was impossible to set the whole world right. He decided- ‘*I will correct my society and the city around*’. He became old. The people around did not change. He reviewed his determination - in the limited time available at my disposal *I will teach my family members and guide them to live a virtuous life*. And then came the day when the death knocked at his doors. Realization dawned upon him and he told to himself – I have unnecessarily wasted my valuable life in trying to correct the ways of the world, then of the society and then of the family. If only I had taken a vow to correct myself, the whole world would have changed.

(ii) The King Emperor who was disciple of the Confucius came to him and posed a problem - Dishonesty, corruption and immorality are prevalent. In their race for materialistic prosperity they are indulging into unethical activities. Everyone is aspiring for worldly pleasures. In such a state would it be possible to find out a person who is virtuous and has divine qualities. Confucius answered - Why not! I can immediately point out YOU, because in you I can see a burning desire to search for truth and to propagate virtues. One who embarks upon the search of truth and righteousness is the person who is great and has divine blessings. The King asked – I may be a great man in your eyes, I wish to see a person who is greater than me. Confucius said - I am that greater man because a great man like you has chosen to come to me. The King

persisted – Master! I want to see a person who is still greater. Kindly lead me unto him.

Confucius said – there is no dearth of such persons and in their search we need not go anywhere. You will find them here and now. All that we need is to change our vision.

Confucius then looked around and asked the King to look in the direction where Confucius was pointing his finger. There was an old aged person who was busy digging a well. Confucius then asked the King – can you tell me why is he digging the well? Would he be able to drink water of the well? And, if so, for how long? How many days are still left in his life to live?

Confucius then explained – one who indulges into selfless service for others; those who do good deeds just for the sake of doing and do not even think who will be the beneficiary; some such persons even lay their lives for the welfare of others. Such persons are real great; through them the God reflects his splendor and magnanimity on the earth. Such persons are beyond the reach of life and death.

The Spirit of Tao has been authored by the authors not for themselves but for others. Even they do not know who will be the beneficiaries?

The Spirit of Tao’, the book authored by the learned co-authors, is Tao re-born, re-incarnate. I have touched only one out of the 81 verses. The book calls for a conference or a seminar or a series thereof in which every chapter is taken up as a theme for a session. The philosophy contained in the book is so potent.

I dedicate this great work ‘The Spirit of Tao’ to those for whom it is meant. Guruji and Padmaji! I gratefully acknowledge and admire the noble service you have done to humanity by adorning *the Spirit of Tao* in a book form. I am thankful to the organizers for giving me this opportunity of sharing my few random thoughts with you all. I am beholden to you all for listening to me with patience.
