

Preface

The present monograph was written mainly during 2013 and 2014 when I held a National Fellowship awarded by the Indian Council for Social Science Research. The basic motivation has been to relate ethics and moral ethos to society in its various facets with a somewhat sharper focus on economics and related subjects. While this body of thought has, in recent decades, received considerable attention from many eminent economists, including several Nobel Laureates like Amartya Sen and Kenneth Arrow, it has not yet come to be a part of the mainstream discipline so as to enjoy the status one associates with topics such as microeconomic theory, macroeconomic policy, finance, economic development, econometrics, trade theory and industrial economics. Yet, it is not obvious why this class of issues should have been important to me, who had spent most of his earlier academic career teaching and researching on topics such as macroeconomic theory and policy, econometric modeling and financial markets at the Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi and other universities in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Looking back it must very well have been so because I have had the privilege to spend the last fifteen years associated, in different capacities, with Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (Puttaparthi, India) where the system of education is fully saturated with the promotion of human values under the guidance of Sri Sathya Sai Baba with no compromises on either side. The meticulous objective has been to turn out students who are not only competent to undertake challenging assignments in the world outside as it exists today but also be inclined to serve the society to promote welfare in whichever way they can best do it. No wonder that, the Master's program in Economics was drafted so as to include a compulsory course in "**Ethics and Economics**" which I taught for several years. All this might very well have also been the germination of my intrinsic, though dormant, interest in ethical issues. I recall having agreed even at the University of Delhi to have an active involvement in different programs organized by World University Service and Gandhi Bhavan for nearly fifteen years before moving out here.

The foregoing account may look, rather oddly, self-centric but is, in fact, intended only to explain how the subject chosen for this monograph turned out to be what it is. One hardly needs to say that the basic motivation for looking at

life in a certain way comes from what one sees all round. This is manifested by increasing inequality across as well as within societies; the new dormant ways in which crime is taking place; blatant gender bias; growth of violence within as well as across religious and other affiliations; demoralization of state as an activist social institution; lack of a deep social commitment in corporate strategies for growth; and, unidentifiable tendency for corruption in all social agencies. All these seem to have deep economic roots. With all this one should not be surprised if economic prosperity does not lead to human happiness.

Fortunately, the awareness of the problems mentioned above is considerably increasing in all types of social deliberations. It is encouraging to see that the new thinking is exemplified by many leading academics. In particular, it is heartening that there are many thinkers who have argued not only for a well-motivated analysis to understand the realities of life but also to revise our basic theories so as to reorient these towards actual behavior with underpinnings of idealism. The problem is, by no means simple as it involves tying together a framework which can explain not only what is happening but also what ought to happen. The task is, indeed challenging, and we may have to wait considerably more, searching for an appropriate academically acceptable way out.

In line with the foregoing observations this monograph deviates significantly from the usual coverage of ethical issues relating to economics and more broadly society. It covers in some diversity the evolution of basic economic thought before turning to several empirical and analytical issues relating to human happiness. Considerable attention is paid not only to market which has governed the economic system for centuries but as required, also to the state as a fundamental social institution. A relatively modern and quickly realized development in the form of the financial system, which brings together the state and the economy, receives special attention with its ethical underpinnings.

The monograph deviates considerably from the usual understanding, as it goes on to examine ethical issues consistent with the higher view of life. Though the start is made with religion as the most ancient human institution in its ethical perspective, it goes further into a considerable degree of abstraction as spirituality which is now attracting the attention of many competent and well-known scientists. To bring the discussion back to the world we understand and live in, the monograph concludes with three well-known India-based episodes as international missions. These cover, rather briefly the ethical messages we have received from Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda combined, and Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The ethical relevance of these messages at both individual as well as social levels in today's world cannot be exaggerated.

I am considerably indebted to many of my friends, colleagues, and well wishers for different ways in which they have helped me to undertake and complete this task. I am sure many of them may not even be aware of the way they have been helpful. First of all, I wish to express my gratitude to Professor G. Venkataraman who is an eminent scientist and an exceptionally knowledgeable person on a wide variety of issues that humanity is facing today. My first substantive contact and significant interaction with him started with the two of us getting together to handle a

course on **Awareness** for all postgraduate students at the Prasanthi Nilayam campus of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. Our exchange of views on human values in the contemporary world has fortunately continued over the recent years.

I am also enormously grateful to Professor Prasanta K. Pattanaik, Professor Emeritus, University of California, Riverside, USA, and an internationally reputed scholar of economic theory, for having kindly agreed to write a foreword to this book. I am happy to mention that Professor Pattanaik is an elected Fellow of the Econometric Society, Public Choice Society and Human Development and Capability Association. He has held top faculty positions at Cambridge University, Harvard University and at Delhi School of Economics.

This study has been completed under the National Fellowship Scheme of the Indian Council for Social Science Research, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India during the two years: February 2013 through January 2015. The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning provided excellent facilities needed for the study. I am indebted to my colleagues from different disciplines for helpful frequent interactions with me. Needless to add that I owe many thanks to authorities and administrative staff at the Sri Sathya Institute of Higher Learning for dealing with their responsibilities with much concern. My thanks also to authorities at the Indian Council for Social Science Research for offering the fellowship to me and later handling it with much concern. I am particularly grateful to Professor R. Radhakrishna of the Centre for Economic and Social Change, Hyderabad, India, for encouraging me to undertake the task.

I was able to benefit considerably from my frequent visits to the Delhi School of Economics where I have had access to the wonderful Ratan Tata Library. I also received much support, in different ways, from the Centre for Development Economics as well as the Department of Economics at the Delhi School of Economics. I take this opportunity to express my deep sense of gratitude to the authorities at all these institutions. I am, in particular grateful to Professor Pami Dua, Director, Delhi School of Economics, and Professor Aditya Bhattacharjea, Chairman, Department of Economics, Delhi School of Economics for several facilities without which my task would have been harder. Dr. Lokesh Sharma, Chief Librarian of the Ratan Tata Library, and his many colleagues have gone out of the way to assist me. My thanks to them. For similar help I thank all staff members at the central library of the Prasanthi Nilayam campus of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. Needless to say that none mentioned above can be held responsible for the views and assertions expressed in this work. Sagarika Ghosh and Nupoor Singh of Springer have frequently gone out of the way to help me. I am considerably grateful for their generous attitude.

Finally and most significantly, this work could not have been completed without the enormous though invisible support I received all along from my wife Krishna. Above all, I would like to put on record the inspiration we have received from our beloved daughter, Kanika to pursue a life in search of enlightenment. How far we have succeeded, we are unable to judge.

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