

## CHAPTER – VI

### A COMPARATIVE AND CRITICAL ESTIMATE

The spectrum of the term 'Philosophy' is wide. Its scope is considered as consisting of reflections upon experience as a whole. It includes all varieties of experience, man's experience in relation to himself, to other beings and to the world he lives in. It is indeed true that any worthwhile study of society must be ultimately philosophical in its nature and any philosophical theory must be concerned with the study of human society. Philosophy must include within its scope, the study of values, ends, ideals, not primarily what exists or has existed or may be expected to exist, but rather the meaning and worth of these modes of existence.

In the proposed dissertation, we intend to explore in terms of philosophical reflection the relevance of what Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Swami Swarupananda say regarding some important aspects of individual and society, in their various writings and lectures. We shall argue that a philosophical enquiry of their thinking about society would reveal that their message and vision are philosophically relevant even in present day social context.

Swami Vivekananda considers an individual as potentially Divine having infinite possibilities. An individual should think

himself as identified with the Divine (*śivoḥamī*) and treat others as the manifestation of the same Divinity. He was deeply influenced by the first Mantra of the *Īsopaniṣad* – *Īśāvāsyamidam sarvam yat kiñca jagatyām jagat*. That is each and every thing is the manifestation of the Divinity. This is the promise from which the conclusion follows ‘*Tena tyaktena bhujñīthā mā ḡḡdhah karyasiddhanam*, i.e. one should enjoy through renunciation without being greedy to others properties. Vivekananda thinks that the seed of morality remains in the first statement. First, why does an individual ‘feel’ for other social beings ? In reply it can be said that as all human beings are the part of our Self, we should ‘feel’ for them morally. Otherwise it would be taken as a suicidal case (*ātmahana*).

Secondly, why does a man feel for others if he does not believe in the existence of Divinity at all etc ? In reply, it may be said that an individual may not have belief in Divinity but he believes in humanity as such which is tantamount to Divinity. To him to serve human being is to serve God.

Thirdly, can Vivekananda’s thought be considered materialistic? The answer is in the positive. His materialistic outlook is revealed when he considers ‘bread’ as a prime factor in an individual’s life than religion, harmonises Islamic body with Vedāntic brain, advises to play football than to read the *Gītā*. To him

material needs are to be fulfilled first if someone wants his spiritual awakening.

Fourthly, can really Vivekananda's philosophy be called practical Vedānta ? It is claimed that Vivekananda has propagated practical Vedānta in modern time, which is taken as a tremendous contribution to the philosophy. In fact I have a little reservation to accept this theory. Our ancient classical Vedānta was not impractical in this sense. All the principles of Vedānta can be applicable to our life. The world is *Māyā* or illusory according to *Sankara*. It does not mean that it has no utility in our life. If we think this world as the manifestation of Brahman or *ātman* the present attitude to the world is changed which is called *Māyā*. The new attitude to the world as the manifestation of Brahman can enable us to do selfless work, moral work, service to the society without being *narrowly* attached to it (in a disinterested way). The advice of the *Bhāgavadgītā* is regarding the same Self. After knowing if Arjuna is inspired to action. It is a purely misconception that the Vedāntic principles are applicable in the forest and hills. The concepts of *Lokasamgraha*, *Jīvanmukta*, *niskāma karma* etc. are related to the practical aspect of morality, which, I believe, Vedānta alone can teach. If the vedāntic principles as laid down by Vivekananda are taken into consideration, the social harmony or an ideal society would come up. Swami Vivekananda highlighted the principles of the traditional Vedānta in a new way and hence it may be called 'Old wine in a new bottle'.

Sri Aurobindo also has prescribed some philosophical foundations of forming an ideal society. To him an ideal society is a Divine society (*Bhāgavatasamāja*), which is constituted by an individual the power of Supra mental consciousness.

First, how can an individual attain such consciousness ? He has prescribed the method of *yoga* through which an individual can awaken his power occupying the nucleus position in human personality called *Rtacit* i.e., (Creative faculty of *Saccidānanda*). To him natural body is constituted with physical, vital and mental self. Our internal use potential power called *rtacit* is not free in normal condition as it is surrounded by the above-mentioned three selves. This natural order can be changed through *yogic* practice and the *Caityapurusa* or *rtacit* can be brought forward. In this way he can enlighten himself and can be transformed to the Divine being. The society of such Superman is an ideal one which was designated as the symbol of the Divinity.

Secondly, a question may be raised : Is a society belonging to symbolic stage at Vedic time an ideal in the modern stage? Sri Aurobindo replies that the same society will not be repeated as it was. This society will be advanced in technology and engineering but the spiritual outlook will remain the same. He has described this change as '*spiral*'. What is available in the symbolic stage will be repeated at the age of the Superman spirally which is an ideal society.

Lastly, how can a society be treated as an ideal one by Sri Aurobindo ? The reply can be given in the following way. A society can be treated as an ideal one when all of its members are considered as equal in all respects. *Sarvodaya* as conceived by Gandhiji. All social members can be uplifted morally, economically if they can manifest their Divine power which is within.

According to Swami Swarupananda 'character' is one of the important major factors in man's life. To give a moral foundation of society Swami Swarupananda engaged himself to various works in society. As his concept of society bears a normative and critical overtone and serves more as a pointer to what a society should be, the conflict between the image of an ideal society and the real society be set to the innumerable evils like various types of unrest, religious, communal riots, cultural crisis, problems related to women, children and overall lacking of self-confidence and self-reliance. Swami Swarupananda's *ayāchak* way of life as a socio-philosophical ideal is to be considered as revolutionary in the 21<sup>st</sup> century context of India's society. He did not stop with theoretically propagating the ideal of being *ayāchak* but practiced it in his life and inspired his followers to stand on their own legs without the least mentality for begging (*Bhikṣā*). His propagation of simplified mode of religious rites and rituals are in fact an attempt to develop a commonality (*akātma bhūdha*) among people and avoid divisional forces of hierarchy in religious life of beings. His approach of man-making ideology has been reflected in his effort to build up the

character of the individual being in society. The ideal of '*charitragathan or character buildings*' is thus a revolutionary factor in today's India's societal development and progress. A careful study of Swami Swarupananda's writings would reveal how forcefully he argued in favour of *unity in diversity* as the message of India's culture. A comprehensive study of Swami Swarupananda's social thinking from philosophical perspective and evaluation of his thinking about society covering his writings and lectures has still been a long felt desideration. Our proposed dissertation is a humble attempt in this direction.

The main objective of the proposed dissertation is to give an exhaustive exposition in philosophical terms of Swami Swarupananda's view of ideal society. But in order to have a comprehensive understanding of his views on man and his relation to society, it is necessary to know the historical background upon which Swami Swarupananda built up his opinions and acted as a visionary with '*far sight, fore sight, and insight*'. Swami Swarupananda has firm conviction that unless we can bring change in individual members of the society there is no hope of building up a good society. So he emphasised on the character building of individual being through proper moral training. It is interesting to see thus what are the devices introduced for building up a future society he dreamt. But the importance of thoughts and actions of Swami Swarupananda are yet to be explored properly to focus on the relevance of his social thinking in the present day context. We shall

also endeavour to determine his place as a social philosopher and a humanist in modern India.

Let us summarise the contributions of these three thinkers.

Vivekananda has propagated a peculiar type of materialism, which may be described as an Advaitic one. He has made a significance contribution to the world of philosophy by harmonising Islamic body and Vedāntic brain, and material wants and spiritual needs. To him first bread has to be taken care of and afterwards religion. No religion or performance of ritualistic rites is possible without proper and adequate food (*khāli pete dharma hai nā*). Moreover, Vivekananda has emphasized the physical fitness for the attainment of spiritual upliftment. A sound body always gives signal to the betterment of mind, which leads one to the attainment of spirituality. That is why, he favours to play football than to read *Bhāgavadgītā* in the house. Vivekananda is the first Indian modern thinker who has shown his equal respect to the downtrodden people of the society. Each and every man, however poor or downtrodden he may be, is thought as worshipable as the Divine being. He thinks "My heart ached when we think of the poor, the low, in India, .... they feel the blows showered upon them by a cruel society..... They have forgotten they too are men..... Religion is not at the fault ..... Logical development of Hinduism – Buddhism.... Nerved with Lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the downtrodden.... go down in length and breadth ... the gospel of

equality ... if you cannot do this then fie upon your education and culture, and fie upon your studying Vedas and Vedānta" (Collected works , vol. IV, p. 381).

Vivekananda's analysis of socio-political history was that society is ruled in terms by the four castes. The priestly (*Brāhmaṇa*) class assumes power first, and at such a time there was a great intellectual activity. In this age *sattva* is dominant. This is followed by the supremacy of the *kshatriya* caste which rules by the sword, and in this age *Rajas* prevails. Later *Vaishyas* begin to rule, as is the case in modern times, at such a time business flourishes and there is great generation of wealth. Finally, the *Shudra* class rules, that is the rule of the working class; at such a time *Tamas* is everywhere. We must here bear in mind that to Vivekananda the four castes were a kind of division of labour. A person belongs to a particular caste owing to the kind of work he chooses, not because of his birth in a particular caste. Thus, on his view, caste should not be made hereditary, it should change according to one's station in life. Even the general composition of society changes in different ages, so does its dominant national character.

For Vivekananda, religion and morality are inseparable. Usually a distinction is made between morality and religion. Morality is said to be practiced in the web of human interactions here and now whereas religion transcends the worldly relationship in quest of God. Religion is regarded to be other worldly, human

relationships do not play any significant role in the realisation of God. Vivekananda shows the close-knit relationship between religion and morality. He argues that religion does not belong to a transcendent realm cut off from the historical realm. God is not distant heaven isolated from the individual. In fact, each individual being is divine. Religion is realised by living activity in the world, serving humanity inculcating fellow-feelings and bridging the gap between the other and oneself.

Vivekananda defines morality in terms of unselfishness – ‘that which is selfish is immoral, that which is unselfish is moral.’ To be moral is to go beyond the naturalistic realm. It is to break the bondages of senses and the material forces working in the world. When one makes an effort to realise this then, one enters into the sphere of morality. At the materialistic end there is a mad craze for the fulfillment of selfish interests at all costs even by roughing other beings. The result is immoral actions giving rise to vices like hatred, jealousy and violent struggle. For the sake of one’s selfish interests, one is ready to go to any extent to harm the other. The materialistic pursuits revolve around the ‘I’ when the centre is ‘I’, it is called *pravṛtti* (inclination), the other is only a means to serve my ends. ‘Me’ and ‘mine’ (*ahamkāra and mamatā*) are the sources of all evils. In the realm of morality the centre is ‘thou’, which Vivekananda calls as *nivṛtti* refraining from actions. It is to rise above the narrowness of ‘me’ and ‘mine’. *Pravṛtti* stands for ‘evil work’ while *nivṛtti* stands for good work. *Nivṛtti* is the basis of morality, which

leads to self-abnegation to sacrifice one's selfish interests for the sake of the other. The aim of religion is the realisation of freedom that is attained through morality which follows the path of *nivṛtti*. The latter leads to selfless actions in search of intrinsic values. Love, charity, endurance, self-sacrifice, fellow-felling, treating others as ends- in – themselves are the moral values to be practiced.

Sri Aurobindo also highlights that human body can be transformed into a Divine Body by way of following Yogic procedure and can bring Divinity in this mortal body. To him *yoga* has a tremendous power of changing the internal cells deadling him a Divine one. Nucleas in the body as said in the *yoga* is the key factor of an individuals transformation. To him a man's road to spiritual supermanhood will be opened when he declares boldly that all he has yet developed, including the now no longer sufficient for him, and that to uncase, discover, set free this greater light within shall be henceforward his pervading pre-occupation. Then will his philosophy, art, science, ethics, social existence, vital pursuits be no longer an exercise of mind and life, done for themselves, carried in a circle, but a means for the discovery of a greater Truth behind mind and life and for the bringing of its power into one human existence. We shall be on the right road to become ourselves, to find our true law of perfection, to live our true, satisfied existence in our real being and divine nature.

Swami Swarupananda's contribution to Philosophy lies in the fact that he has given emphasis on building of character (*Charitragathan*), taking the vow of not wanting (*ayācaka*) and self-reliance. His philosophy based on the theistic and spiritual approach. According to him, theistic view is that the Ultimate Truth exists whatever name it may be. This truth may be called God, Allah, or any other name. Integral (*Akhaṇḍa*) view approaches to life and society by way of *Akhaṇḍa omkār sādhanā*. *Omkār sādhanā* is meditating on *omkāra* or indivisible reality and collective prayer (*Samabeta Upāsānā*). These bring the commonality and harmony among the social beings. Morality campaign (*caritragathan*) is possible through maintaining hereditary (*Bangśāmukramik*) Brahmacharya; continuous process upto 9<sup>th</sup> generation throughout the family to probity, and appearance divine man (*devamānava*) into the family. It is also require to restraining of senses, not misusing the power, power utilisation in a proper way. Maintaining ideals of non-begging (*Abhīkṣā*) *karmayoga*, loving and respectful all the social being without maintaining any caste and creed. A man should build his own character in a moral way so that he receives power from within. To him also body is as real as Brahman is Self.

Three thinkers have affinities in their thinking all of them discover Divinity in Man and hence human body is the temple of God. For this reason it can never be illusory (*māyā*) as believed by the Advaitins. All the thinkers owe- the origin of their thinking in the tradition, but it is not taken into. They have freshly interpreted the

tradition and made it up-to-date for the upliftment of the society. All the celebrated thinkers have invented different paths for the realisation of the Truth as per their own *Sādhanā*. Vivekananda followed the path of *Jñāna* and *karma*, Swami Swarupananda followed the path of *Jñāna*, *karma* and *Bhakti* while Sri Aurobindo followed the yogic path. Paths, though different in nature, destination is the same.