

The discussion made in the previous chapters prove that we cannot do away with religion. Let us now find out what religion has done for mankind. Following the lead of Herbert Spencer¹ who applied the principle of evolution to every sphere of human life, we may say that religion has the fitness to survive the onslaughts of reason. And doubt is a friend and guide of religion to clear the mist and confusion about it. The natural question now comes whether religion conveys any truth in the present age which is the age of science. The findings of science are obtained through a process of experiment and observation for which science commands our faith. But the problem is that we can not solve the deep mysteries of nature. Ultimate scientific ideas remain unfathomable. These scientific ideas can hardly be brought within the scope of rational concept as these ideas exceed our comprehension. In all directions the scientific investigations bring an insoluble enigma. Human intellect is endowed with limitations.

Now the question is - can religion concern itself with the Ultimate Reality which is transcendental in its nature? Immanuel Kant provided out that our reason leaves us free to believe that behind the thing-in-itself there is a just god because our moral sense claims us to believe it. For Pascal, the heart has reasons of its own, which our head can never understand. Rosseau claims that above logic of the head there is the feeling of the heart. Bergson pointed out the possibilities of intuition as the medium of direct knowledge.

In our own age, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda viewed that it is through the heart that all realisations come. Sri Ramakrishna assured us that it is open to everyone to see the godhead. We have to purify our minds and heart and when this purification of the mind and heart will be crystallised then Reality will be revealed to this purified mind.

This intuition of pure heart leads one towards the immediate experience of Reality. The Vedanta teaches us that the real self is beyond both mind and matter.

The physicists have discovered that there is nothing but electric forces and vast empty spaces in the universe. But it cannot be admitted that these formless entities are somehow transformed by us into this uniquely beautiful Panorama of nature with moral and aesthetic values. We are in a safe position when we say that through evolution we have achieved the widest and richest view of nature. This process is not yet stopped. So, it would not be illogical to think that we the men of the present stage may be evolved to a stage of Divinity in the far distant future. It may quite reasonably be supposed that the ever-widening and ever-changing affair along with evolution which has brought us so far, would take us further to the plane of Divinity in the not too remote future.

Now it is reasonable to say that the Seers are individual specimens of higher altitude towards which humanity

is advancing through the process of evolution. These Seers disclose the unity and harmony which are reigning supreme eternally within the core of the universe. Religiously disciplined nature of man alone prepares the mind to unveil the fundamental unity of the universe and universal love which will reign supremely. Religion eliminates the baser instincts of men and manifests the Divinity within us. It might be said that religion of humanity would lead to the realisation of God and consequent manifestation of Divinity in man as religion gives us the genuine incentive for transcending the brute plane which only can manifest the Divinity in us.

Religion with its association to 'hereafter' serves the purpose of moral discipline. It might be pointed out that it is possible for us to have mistaken idea of religion if we make the mistake of judging it by the consequences of its perverted form. It might be emphasised that this perverted form of religion is the basis of all the crusades, and Jehads and all the wars that this world has faced.

All the creeds, all the prophets, all religions, all the Seers have been reinstalled in their glory by a fresh decree of Truth by which the inner self of humanity as the cry for the brotherhood which is universal in its nature is crying for this response. And Mankind should have the feeling of reverence towards religion.

Now if it is admitted that religion has done good for mankind then the next question is: Can religion bring forth the long cherished world Society?

The world history depicts the picture of the manifold expressions of art, science, ethics and philosophy though there may be differences among the religion of an artist, the religion of a scientist or a religion of a moralist.

But if we have a glimpse to the deep undercurrent flowing amongst the philosophers, scientists, moralists or artists, we find that the leading persons like Rabindra Nath Tagore³, Sir Arthur Eddington⁴, of the worlds philosophy, science, arts or ethics, are men of strong religious characters.

The constituents of true religion are, reason which can stand at the alter of experiments, tolerance for other religious faiths. True religion should be grand combination of reason, faith, tolerance and morality. Religion inspires the spirit of man by which he will be awakened to bring about the upgrading of the beings of the society.

In this modern age, we are too much engaged with our existential problems and so we have not scope to nourish our religious spirit.

But we have to cultivate the feeling of respect for truth and for the upliftment of humanity as a whole because true religious feeling feels fellowship not only with god but also with his fellowmen of the whole world. We are now creeping to win the heart of the whole world. Discords and disharmonies are not the last words. Concord and harmony will surely be achieved. and the melody of harmony will then be heard and men will be shackled by the chain of love. Then we

will be the members of a world-society which demands the responsibility of fellowship of man towards man. We must have to suffer with our fellowmen as we are bound up with the chain of love. This bond of love makes life complete as there is no chance for the feeling of otherliness.

Religious attitude may be regarded as a passionate apprehension from the point of view of this ideal. And so even a radically different scientific view of the world can be religious if its nature is optimistic and imaginative as a whole in relation to good and evil. Man's religious instinct is deep rooted. We may say, therefore, that even a man who does not believe in god, has also his religion. Religion being a growing experience is expanding its horizon more and more by intellect. The nature and character of religion will be determined by more and more knowledge. Our spiritual life needs nourishment in our intellectual and physical life by which we will be able to come up to encompass the recognition of love and be the king to reign supreme. In the present time we have our intellectual problems which are exceedingly difficult to be solved. Yet the feeling of harmony within ourselves can be felt in our heart. Man is an individual and at the same time he is a member of the society. The most necessary conditions of this society are, cooperation and feeling of friendliness which is expansive in its nature. In the map of this society the whole world must be encompassed. This world society has its concern for the unification of mankind through

modern techniques of modern science. According to Bertrand Russell, morality and religion is not far from the principles of humanity. Religion is rather all too human in its nature and the aspect of worship is the aspect of worship of humanity as a whole.

Happiness depends upon harmony and unitiveness with other men and then and then only humanity will come to reign supreme.

The present age has the urgent need for a world government. The inner change of the heart of man will make them realise the need for world-wide cooperation. This is the most vital factor for the survival of human beings.

We are now going to unearth the question :- Is religion so rich enough to be an experience of the ultimate Reality. Indian philosophy relies on the truth that there can be the spiritual experience of the reality and this experience attains its clarity through contemplation which means the experience of the eternal. This conception comes nearer to the Jewish, Christian, Muslims seers who have tested and retested their own experience.

It might be remarked in this context that for the Existentialists also truth is subjective. We have to feel it within ourselves and for them freedom can be achieved here and now.

Experience being as direct and immediate knowledge is to be characterized by the feeling of absolute certainty and the true form of Reality should be known through one's own understanding. To gain an experience of reality there should be a wellfabricated harmony of reason and impulse. The modern culture also has been firmly convinced of the moral character of the universe. In the modern age., there is the widening of intellect and the rapid dissolution of accepted values. The anxiety, the despair pervades the sky of the mind. Yet under these inner disorders the religious instinct is flowing incessantly to dispel all the darkness of the mind. Religion is not to be regarded as a stumbling block to the rational thinking as religion is undertaking the process of revolutionary adjustments to the modern life as long as it operates with reason and faith.

Religion is a transforming experience of spiritual consciousness when the individual withdraws his soul from all outward events, and looks towards his inner self then he has the realisation of his being which constitutes the most probable proof of the reality of god.

Our religious experience is something immediate while the theory of reality is an inference. There is big gap between the immediate contact with reality, given by the religious reflection and religious contact and the opinion about it.

The fulfilment of man's life lies in the spiritual experience where the whole mind leaps forward to such an experience which is beyond any phenomenal fact which requires no logic, no argument & no hypothesis. Without this spiritual recovery, we can not even touch the feet of reality.

We are in the incessant search for the achievement of the ultimate goal.

Man seeks the ultimate goal of his life which is really the "Iness" or "oneness" of all being. This realisation needs the practice of discipline of the nature. This disciplining of nature can reach the altitude of perfection where it can dispel all darkness with his intuitive self-knowledge. White-heads's definition of religion is as follows. What man does in his solitariness - can be said in some sense as oneness of the self as the self in his solitariness finds oneness of all beings. Plotinus, Spinoza, Hegel and Bradley have enriched the theory of knowledge with their intellectual intuitive self-knowledge. In the recent time, Bergson stresses the importance of intuitive-unitive knowledge which can be attained by this disciplined nature of man.

It might be pointed out here that William James refers specifically to the discipline of Yoga. According to him the mystic comes in touch with a world which is really one. In this practice of discipline, the thinking principle is to be suppressed to attain the concentration of mind on one object. The truth of life can never be solved by empirical

knowledge and thinking. The truth of life lies in self-knowledge. Through this self-knowledge a man can only understand this universe. Naturalistic Humanism of Dewey makes him to propose a substitute for religion what he calls religious which is surely an attitude of devotion towards an ideal end to bring its unity with itself and with the whole world.

Vedanta identifies this unification of the self in oneness as the Absolute self. This self-knowledge alone can understand this universe and this self-knowledge is the ultimate goal of life.

This disciplining of nature is the only way for the attainment of the ultimate goal of life. The truth of life and existence is necessity transcendent in nature. The riddle of life can never be solved by empirical thinking and experience. So man has to recourse to faith as truth can not be reasoned out. Men can have faith and this attitude of man can lead him towards religion. What we need now is the proper growth and nourishment of our psyche. Man's basic physical structure is the same all over the world. We have to share a common destiny. Religion should not be a block to rational thinking and social progress as they are all undergoing revolutionary readjustments to modern life.

All religions in the proper sense of the term are now shouldering the responsibilities of understanding the changes in the social orders and thus are preparing us to meet these by the modifications of themselves.

We must become aware of the future dimensions of human life. Man's psychological structure is evolving and what is ahead of us is growth in our Psyche.

Let us now analyse the relation between man as a social being and religion. Religion, at the same time is intensely personal and social in its attitude. The oncoming of new religion questioned the accepted traditional ideals.

The sociology of religion is well fabricated with social phenomena.

In the modern age man is missing his soul which is Divine in nature. Man is now seeking his soul. This search indicates the progress of the society. When the mind of the individual will be full of joy and peace then he will be merged in the rest of mankind.

Religious ideas and emotions are interwoven with man's inner world of self hood which tends to be socially patterned and it reflects man's social experience .(Compare: Jagate anandajajne amar nimantran - Rabindra Nath).

We have the unquenched thirst for the ultimate Reality. For this reason we have to seek the answer how to quench this thirst and is this thirst really genuine or not?

Our nature is self-exceeding and so we seek to unveil the curtain of reality. The satisfaction of the physical needs can not quench this thirst for knowing the super physical reality.

The ontological disposition of mind drives man to know the 'why' and the 'how' of things and to know the meaning and purpose of life and the underlying unity of this world. Metaphysics being the spiritual necessity of life plays an important part in the life of the thinking being.

It has been emphasised by Socrates that man has to become like God as far as it is possible. The feeling of privation leads us for the attainment of completeness for which we are longing so much.

In modern philosophy we find that the examination of our nature as moral agents enables Kant to give a richer and deeper meaning to idea and he conceives that the contemplation of the starry heaven above should be accompanied by the recognition of the moral laws within us.

The ultimate goal of life is the quest for truth. We have the firm conviction that He is. This may possibly be the reasons for which we find, in the philosophical circle so many proofs for the existence of God whom we think as Reality or truth. These proofs signify the quest for the Reality.

This quest is not peculiar only in the circle of philosophy but it is inevitable in any branch of knowledge. As a result science is also longing to unveil the Reality. Religion and science with no contradiction should search for the Reality though their methods are different.

In the modern era we must admit that science and religion do not belong to two camps. We must realise that the religious truth is deeply scientific in its attitude.

We should exercise our intuitive understanding to unveil the metaphysical truth which will impel us towards the never-ending effort to clarify the mystery of this universe.

The universe tends to become more complicated for which some scientists and philosophers adopted the theory of emergence. For them new quality emerges in every step of evolution which could not be predicted from knowledge of the constituent elements before their organisation. This quality is really new but at the same time not an additional factor.

For some philosophers mind is an emergent quality; but this mind is not the highest possible emergent quality as religion aspires the high flights of mind towards the world which is "Deity". This is the next highest quality, in all probability.

We have to bear much pains and sufferings for the growth of us as the world is nothing but a veil of soul making. And man is actually evolving towards the plane of Divinity. Upanishadic maxim 'tat tvam asi' confirms that all men are in the Divine. And religion is the only way for the direct apprehension of the Supreme.

The seventeenth century shivered with a sudden revolutionary change in the world picture which experienced the main work of Kepler, Gallileo and Newton, and the world picture of modern man is now captured by science.

The impact of the new physics of relativity and quantum theory do not make Science to cease to be mechanistic. Teleological view of the world is the general characteristic of the religious attitude. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle developed teleological systems of metaphysics. The modern age under the influence of science, has a prejudice in the opposite direction.

But these two kinds of explanations are not inconsistent with one another. If we want the highest kinds of knowledge we should have the understanding of everything in this universe in terms of religion which is unitive in its attitude which is the ultimate goal of Science too.

It is now necessary to have a glimpse over the question whether the world is a moral order or not.

The question which bears much importance in the intellectual and the spiritual history of mankind is what do we mean by moral order. According to some philosophical thinkers, the assertion that the moral values are objective, is identical with the assertion that the world is a moral order.

According to another type of thinking, moral values are subjective. And this implies obviously that the world is not a moral order.

Now the words 'objective' and 'subjective' are extremely ambiguous. If the existence of value is wholly or partly dependent on any human mental state then it will be called as subjective value. On the contrary the objective value is not in any case dependent upon the human mental states.

Now the ultimate moral character of the universe, whether it is personified in the form of a righteous and transcendent god or is viewed as immanent in the world process itself, has been a part of all advanced religious culture.

But according to the most fashionable intellectuals of the modern age, the values are subjective and relative in correlation with the man, that is the world is not a moral order. This view, however, makes man to be perplexed as the older religious view has its sustenance upto now.

The modern intellectual culture has been firmly convinced in the moral character of the universe. In this modern age there is the sign of inner disorder everywhere yet the deep down currents of religious instinct flows incessantly. Within all our heightened technological might there is a threat of overall meaninglessness which has the grip over our heart and soul.

But we should not get loose of hope as because religion now comes to the scene which will discipline the nature of man. It has been already mentioned by us that religion is not a stumbling block for the rational thinking as it is

undergoing the process of revolutionary adjustments to the modern life.

Religion is the only way by which man can have attainment of peace which is a gift of religion engulfing man's whole existence. True religion can stand at the alter of verification which has the quality of tolerance. It gives inspiration to the spiritual minds to be righteous and it is also the source of solace to the distressed minds. It also subserves the purpose of invigorating the minds by which man finds strength of his mind. True religion is a sister branch which shows its face in certain areas and in certain times of the history. Religion has its all envolving existence in the life of man. Man can not deny religion as it shows us face in certain times of the history of art, science, literature, ethics and philosophy.

The medieval world-picture was a mixture of scientific and philosophical ideas. There we find three main philosophical ideas viz. god, world purpose and the moral order of the world.

The first idea is that of God. The main point of this idea is that He has been conceived as a conscious spirit like a human mind which has plans and purposes.

This conscious Being, created the world at a particular time in the past out of nothing.

This is the original basic idea of creation of the world though sophisticated thinkers are aware of the tremendous difficulties of this anthropomorphic conception of God.

The second idea is that of purpose of the creation. The term 'telos' means purpose, To give teleological explanation of an event is to ascribe some purpose to it. Mechanical explanation wants to find out the cause of the creation.

It is to be remarked that religion has generally been associated with teleology and science with mechanism.

We have the general notion that science has ceased to be mechanistic under the impact of the physics of relativity and quantum theory. But no physicist ever is successful to give teleological explanations of phenomena as these do not come under the range of his science. The physicist's explanation is still entirely mechanical.

Teleological view of the world in general is a characteristic of a religious attitude to the world.

It is to be noted that the concept of the world governed by purpose was not the invention of Christianity. The ancient Hebrew religion is permeated by it.

The ancient Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle also developed teleological systems of metaphysics. Socrates' philosophy exhibits favour for the teleological explanation and a prejudice against mechanism. This modern

age however, under the impact of modern science shows its prejudice towards the mechanical concept. But the fact is that these two kinds of explanations do not contradict each other. But we should not be biased towards any one of the two explanations. As mechanical explanation is not fully equipped to quench the thirst for the 'why' of things we have to go to the line of the teleological explanation which goes on to enquire into the 'why' of things. This telos or purpose is the vital factor of the religious view of the world. It is the most vital part of our intellectual heritage.

Now the task left for us is to enquire about the relation between the eternal and the temporal.

The core of religious attitude is - what is the relation between the temporal and the Eternal. All the higher religions have insisted that the ultimate goal of life is the realisation of timeless eternity.

In all the higher religions the doctrines about Eternal Reality, bear a close resemblance. It is to be noted that the Philosophy of Eckhart and Otto is substantially the same as that of Sankara. Even the practical technique of Indian and Christian mystics is identical. In all types of religions there is a search for temporal values which are associated with the idea of God and these are mostly physical than spiritual.

We must keep it in mind that religion has always been concerned with psychic world, and not directly with Reality and Eternity. Psychic forces exist within the temporal universe of creatures. With painful sacrifice of the self we can have an access to the psychic world.

Most of the highly developed religions possess a genuinely spiritual as well as a non-spiritual side.

When we cross the realm of the manifested and embodied aspects of reality to that of Reality itself, we find that there is an intensification of detachment, a widening and deepening of mortification.

Nietzsche⁵ divided religion into Apollonian and the Dionysian - the religion of the repressed and the religion of the expressed feeling. We are likely to see a religion of much fuller expression appear when once religion as a fact of life is brought back into our conduct, however, it is not necessary that the new form should preserve exactly the old patterns. There is a hope about the rise of religion for mankind. It is possible for human beings to love, to know each other and virtually, to become actually identical with the divine ground. To achieve this unitive knowledge of the Godhead is the final end and purpose of human existence.

There is a knowledge of Dharma which must be obeyed. The Dharma is a living law of mortification and self awareness. Man's whole life is a spiritual pilgrimage towards a complete self-consciousness to achieve Truth, Goal and Beauty. The plane of Divinity is his destined goal and civilization is to be measured by the steps humanity has taken towards this goal.

CHAPTER - V

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