

CHAPTER - I

MAN

(i) Introduction

The most intricate question in the life of a man is to answer the question – what a man is. We are mostly involved in some other problems of the outwardly world and we think that to visualize the inner world of man is a mere wastage of time and energy and if at all, any concept of man is to be conceived – the task should be shouldered by the philosophers.

This is because the question ‘what a man is’ a notoriously ambiguous one to be answered. A man really does not know what he is, as he is so intimate and well known to him – and there lies the fault for which, we the common men are never concerned with this intricate question though in some intimate moments this question hammers in the inner world of a man. But we become triumphant to overlook this problem of the inner world of us by becoming more concerned with outer world. The case being so yet there are some answers coming from the manifold aspects and ideas.

(ii) Empirical Concept of Man

The empirical concept of man is that it is a certain totality of facts which is immediately given. But this view underestimates the concept of man for which we can not accept this concept wholeheartedly. For along with this corporeal entity there is also the inner entity of man with the series of states of consciousness with feelings, memories, moods and emotions. Within this inner empirical entity there is the shifting play of the mental states which can be distinguished as mere entity of a man. There is one psychological principle which explains all the variations and the vascillations of chaotic experiences which explains the unity of the self of man which originates from the social roots.

(iii) Metaphysical Concept of Man

Metaphysics views man as essentially a substance and individuality of a man consists in its separateness from the body and of other selves. It is the

source of all the order of mental states as it lies at the basis of our psychical life which can not be presented in any conscious state yet it is real. This metaphysical concept of man appears repeatedly in different forms in the philosophical thinking¹ of Kant, Hegel and T. H. Green. Kant presented the subject as the 'pure ego' which is not itself subject to the conditions of space and time. Kant has given full emphasis on the finite existences who are the moral agents. His maxim 'duty for duty's sake' has the implication that one has to sacrifice his selfish motives. Kant deserves due credit as he looks upon man as the moral agent and this phenomenal world is a moral stage where the self has to perform his moral duties. For Kant, man must identify the various items of experience in their place together in their interrelations in one comprehensive apprehension. Then the position of this self leads to somewhat extravagant concept of a self as it is not in time but abiding and constant to be the focus of all our apprehensions and Kant would not also always want to conceive the man in that way. As Kant himself was aware about these problems was led to the view, that there must be also the reality of 'thing-in-itself' which tends to be a distinct reality which bifurcates the reality in the system to the phenomenal world and the noumenal world existing in their own right.

The unsatisfactory features of Kant's philosophy led Hegel to reject the finality of the distinction between the world of phenomena and the world of noumena. For Hegel the 'real is the rational and rational is the real' as the famous text has it. But in Hegel there still remains a division between the incomplete world of things and the complete true reality of things as they are in their proper place in one unified system of things to which we can not fully attain. So, this view of Hegel about man can not fully satisfy our hungry search for man.

Let us now turn towards T. H. Green. He conceives of the timeless subject which makes it possible for us to relate our present sensations to one another and so the man or the subject is not confined to the passing shows of transitory impressions and the spiritual principle in nature which sustains and makes possible the organized world of individuals. But as Green has not taken notice

of the way of Hegel by which Hegel has come to conceive of the world and its shaping as some process whereby thesis and antithesis have been merged in some more complete system. So the natural question which can be asked to Green is what is the relation of the Eternal spiritual principle to the individual subjects of experiences and how the unity of each self finds it. In spite of all these problems it may be mentioned here that whatever fault he may have, yet in Green we can hear the whispering voice of humanity if we keep close our ears to his heart.

(iv) Agnostic Concept of Man

At the close of the last century the impact of scientific discovery and industrialization were the decisive factors in changing the ways of perceiving and thinking. A new empirical and secular temper was articulated by a group of thinkers in Britain. As a result, some philosophical theories appear in the circle of philosophy – such as scepticism, positivism, agnosticism, naturalism.

The word “agnosticism” came to be used as a synonym for atheism, scepticism, positivism, materialism, pantheism and not-knowism. Huxley being dominantly influenced by Hume gave agnosticism its wide currency and stamped it with his own particular meaning. This British agnosticism was predominated on the one hand by the empirical tradition from Locke through Hume and the source was Victorian agnosticism of Kant. This agnosticism takes us at the threshold of the new philosophical world of nihilism and existentialism the world of Bergson, William James and Kierkegaard. If this is the situation of agnosticism, then it can be said that these agnostics have looked into the heart of reality of human existence. Their whole attention is centered with the hard facts of reality within which man has to live. Man’s pangs, sufferings, mental states – are their whole subjects of attention.

(v) British Idealistic Concept of Man

Now the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions underlying the scientific empiricism of the agnostics were essentially examined by the British idealists. So, we can turn to some of the most notable extensions and

modifications of British Idealism and it is in the work of Bradley we find his distinctive contribution in his theory of relations.

For Bradley,² the individual is real. It is one in the sense that its positive character embraces all differences in an inclusive harmony. All diversities of our experiences have their places in the ultimate unity which eludes our thinking. So we must have to abandon the absurdity of thinking of the world as mere appearance. But it is to be kept in mind that by this analysis we can not solve the serious problems of some aspects of the 'givenness' of things which can not be explained only by the transcendent unity of things. Even a thinker like A. S. Pringle Pattison,³ leaves us all the same.

The finite selves however much involved in having the particular identity for which these are incapable of being reduced to any pattern. If it is done then the uniqueness of each self evaporates with its self-determination and freedom of will and as a result of which the condition of responsibility gets lost. Then we can look towards James Ward who takes a substantial departure from traditional Idealism affirming the significance of the distinct existences of the individual particular selves which interact among themselves and are particular presentation with partial modifications. At this juncture we can refer to J. E. McTaggart⁴ who rejected any notion of an ultimate, transcendent reality. For him, love is the basic emotion which binds the finite selves to one another and apart from this community of individuals there is a no reality and the extended material objects are really minds or parts of contents of minds.

(vi) Materialistic Concept of Man

The above noted concepts of man is not an individual man who can be identified by himself alone. He is then only a man when he stands in relation to other man. His relation to other man marks him as man otherwise not. But this concept is not a satisfactory concept of man. And this dissatisfaction impels us to look towards Marx, who envisaged a never ending dialectical pursuit of creations and satisfactions and this pursuit constitutes historical development. It is a mistake, Marx⁵ argues, to attempt to understand human existence by appeal to some universal characteristics like consciousness, speech of religion.

The premise of valid materialism is that human beings distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they beg to produce their own means of subsistence. It is important to stress that Marx does not conceive of this historical process in materialistic terms alone. The thinking process is conditioned by the development of productive forces and the social intercourse corresponding to them. It is man who alters their thinking as they develop their material productions and mutual intercourse. He views that the life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. Marx views that the positive expression "human" corresponds to the definite condition predominant at a certain stage of production and to the ways of satisfying needs prevailing under them. Whatever fault or appreciation goes to Marx that wants time to be evaluated but his total involvement with the problems of man claims due credit. But at the same time, it can not be denied that his estimation of human beings is too mechanical and theoretical at the same time.

In this context we have to give our attention towards Nietzsche who embraces in himself and in his thought some of the most conflicting features of the nineteenth century which though not solved by him yet they came to full expression. Nietzsche views every happening of the worldly phenomena as being governed by the purely material force of the 'will of power'. His belief in the supremacy of matter and of will makes his whole outlook on human existence as Utopian and oriented towards the future. Nietzsche⁶ searched for a purely materialistic explanation of reality. In this regard he was in the same line of thinking of Marx and Tolstoy. His new programme is outlined in the very first aphorism of Human All-to-Human namely, chemistry of concepts and sensations. The chemical analysis of concepts and sensations shows that everything is transient and historical. For him, everything becomes and nothing is. There is no eternal truth. All values and beliefs have evolved and continues to evolve in human history. He envisaged a mankind worthy of the future and this new ideal of mankind is to take the place of God. He is looking forward for the ideal man to come and to reign supreme in this world. His concern is with man and nothing but man which sheds off the charge of nihilism that is thrown

against him. His love, his anxiety for man makes him the great humanist of the history of mankind. Yet we can say that his concern is only with man of the future and not with man of present who is merged into the ocean of sorrows, sufferings and anxieties. He has never met with the actual man who exists in the concrete reality.

(vii) Existentialistic concept of Man

We can now turn back to the actual man who is really the admixture of the actual and of the ideal whose half part is physical and the other part supersedes the physical world. This self-exceeding nature is everywhere apparent.

If we want to define man or want to say that man exists then it is apparent that facts and existence have been conceptually subordinated to general ideas or thought. Phenomenology with its doctrine of essence-intuition theory is the most significant factor in the development of existentialist philosophy. To say that man exists would entail nothing further than a conceptual comprehension of the essence concerned. But it does not mean that 'man really exists as man' is not a mere possibility but an actuality.

According to Martin Heidegger, however, human existence in its unique existentiality claims to be considered on its own account entirely. If we do not recognize this uniqueness then all our concerns and investigations to search the man will be in vain. This seems almost to betray in phenomenology with a shift from the conditions of knowledge to the conditions of being as the question of existence is suspended in the reflection of phenomenology.

The concept of 'essence' has its grip over European thought from Plato to Descartes down to the modern era. European thought is oriented with the concept of essence and it may be conceptualistic or Intellectualistic in its character. Existence is then nothing but conceptualism which means nothing more than the comprehension of the essence concerned. But this is a mere concept but not an existence.

The issue of existence is so unique in its nature that it raises its head in Kant who makes a sharp differences between the idea of existence and existence itself, though in Hegel we find that the intellectual tendency towards the reality of man makes it a mere category of thought.

Soren Kierkgaard⁷, however, revolts against this intellectualism and according to him, concrete reality can only meet the 'metaphysical demand' for actual reality. Philosophical reflection on ideas or essences misses the touch of concrete reality. He gives all emphasis on existence and not on essence. He makes existence a subjective experience. This subjective aspect represents the 'becoming' which is the constituent of existence and being so it unlocks the door for the interest the actualization of possibility.

The systematic shape of this type of philosophy was given a distinct philosophical approach by Heidegger who presented existence with new orientation. Heidegger and Sartre formulated the thinking that existence precedes essence as the states of existence defies all definitions. It is clear thus that there is a clear and distinct transition in the philosophical circle from possibility to actuality and from what is abstract to that which is actual.

This existentialistic thinking introduces the theory of dynamism which does not have the sanction which is static. It proposes a perpetual process of exceedency, a passing beyond the nature what is now. For this reason this thinking has not sanction for any static criterion or definition of any object. According to this thinking, with leaps and jumps we are progressing for further stage of 'being' which has free choice behind which motivates us to the progression of our being. For the existentialists, existence is a concrete principle which is behind all the possible attributes acquired by man. Human being alone can turn back upon itself and can find out his being.

Heidegger⁸ finds out that the analysis of metaphysical subjectivism and epistemological transcendental subjectivism prepares the path for a metaphysics which pertains to the nature of man. The nature of man can be a subject for anthropology which is philosophical in its aspect as it would also treat the

nature of man as man. For Heidegger, the essence-existence distinction or the distinction between possibility and actuality can not account for the real significance of human existence as human existence is not given once for all nor it can be put to use. Existence, for the existentialist is not merely to be as it is in a very unique relationship with the world and other conscious being. Temporality of the finitude is ecstatic as future, past and present are moments of this ecstatic situation and the future is the primary situation. If time is the ultimate horizon of man, time is to be enquired to prove the genuineness of the being of man. Time or history is nothing more than the happening of 'being in the world'. The world is that in which man is always exceeding himself to be what he actually is. For Heidegger, human being is being in the state of finding itself.

The fundamental assertion of the philosophy of existence is that human being are thrown into the world without essence. The conception of consciousness finds place in existentialism, particularly in Jean Paul Sartre. The existentialists do not entertain the self or man which is spiritualistic in its nature and is disassociated from the world. The world has its being because of its 'participation' and 'engagement' of the subjective being with it and the existence of man is really 'worldly'. For Heidegger, consciousness is not enclosed in the boundary of its own self. Sartre thinks that consciousness has its reality only when it has referential function with phenomenal world as consciousness has nothing substantial in it. He wants a combined picture of the world where immanence and concrete reality meet in a togetherness. For him, consciousness is a sheer activity which is transcending towards objects and this human reality is haunted by a totality which is above its reach. The paradoxical situation of man's existence is that what he is not yet is, and is not what he already is. For Sartre, "This consciousness we ought to consider not as a new consciousness but as the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of something". So man can not be defined as having essence because his existence is being out of itself, and his essence remains beyond any determination. Man must create for himself his own essence through his act of choice. Existence depends wholly upon act of choice and it is not grounded upon any ideal

essence. For him, man is responsible for everything he does. The unique significance of this principle of human existence lies in its immense possibility rather than in its actuality. This concept indicates at the same time that the reign of being in which man lies as man, can undergo modification.

If we analyse this philosophy then it is apparent that this philosophy moves centrally round such concepts of human life as death, suffering, anxiety etc. The subjectivity which is involved in existentialism amounts to be mystic in its nature and their preoccupation with being in search for a being though ontological yet it is half-drawn. Yet this theory deserves credit for drawing our attention towards human existence which is not to be counted as a mere object among object. They rightly marked the basic realism of existence.

Now we can look towards P. F. Strawson who in a broad sense labelled the material bodies as basic particulars which could be identified and reidentified without any reference to other types or categories.

According to Strawson¹⁰, from the Cartesian point of view, I can ascribe states of consciousness to myself only if I can ascribe these to others whom I can identify as subjects of experience who possess states of consciousness. He says that "all experiences, stand in a special relation to body M" and that the body of M is somewhat unique as this is what makes body M unique among bodies.

The other objection that he lodged against Cartesianism is : what right have we, in this explanation, to speak of the subject, implying uniqueness? Why should there not be any number of subject of experiences perhaps qualitatively indistinguishable from each subject and each set of experiences standing in the same unique relation to body 'N'? P. F. Strawson then says that the uniqueness of the body does imply the uniqueness of the soul.

He holds further that the concept of a person means a type of entity which engulfs both predicates, ascribing state of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics and are "equally applicable to a single

individual of that single type". For him, the concept of a person is logically prior to that of an individual consciousness for which 'and ego' might be disembodied Person retaining the logical benefit of individuality from having been a 'person'.

(viii) Grecian and Indian concept of man

Let us now turn towards Greece and India for knowing what they understand by 'man' since the Greek and Indian concepts of 'man' are no less significant in this context. The Greeks were interested in understanding the good, the truth and the beautiful for which the life to them became an object of love. In Greece there was the free room for the exercise of understanding which is the outcome of free speculative spirit. There is division among the sophists about the nature of man. Plato conceived the ideas as immortal, whereas man may be base or good. Socrates thought the soul of man is immortal and independent. The thought "of the Greeks, being both rational and humanistic, has become the standard for philosophical judgements in the East".¹¹

Indian culture with its concept of 'tat tvamasi' has influenced the whole world. This concept views the self as eternal who is essentially a subject and not an object. The 'Bhagavadgita' speaks of spirit of man as immortal. For the Indians this world is a 'Dharma - Ksetra'. Man is not merely a creature of time solely dependent upon material possession. Religion, in the life of the Hindus and the Buddhists is a transforming experience which marks to the highest point of spiritual experience and this is inherent in the man himself. Dvitya Janma is the central teaching of the Hindus and Buddhists. "The main aim of almost all the Indian systems is to show the way to salvation and they were written after the ideal of renunciation took definite shape".¹²

Darsana, Jnana, Charitra are the three great principles for the acquisition of self-realization is asserted by Mahavira who was able to realize the inward dignity of his ownself.

For the Sikhs, the aim of life is to develop and nourish what is best in

him by which he can be equal to God. For them ideal of life is the life of active service in the midst of world relations. They specified a model of living and we must have to live in accordance to this model.

In Ramayana, Rama stands as an ideal character of a perfect man. He shows that man must be a real man by being a part of the society and serving the society by sacrificing his all interests. Mahabharat expounds the philosophy of the man and ethical autonomy of self for doing the moral duties of everyday life. The 'Gita' invigorates man by advocating an intense sort of meditation and devotion for the attainment of the highest peak of spirituality. The rich speculation on the self of man in Indian Philosophy is due to persistent belief that true knowledge of the self is the remedy for the pangs and sufferings of the human life.

Vedanta propagates that to be a man is a process of becoming. This concept is found in Nietzsche's concept of man for whom everything becomes and nothing is. All values of the human life have evolved and continues to evolve in the life of man. Nietzsche who is not concerned with the man of present envisaged a mankind who will be worthy of the future. Yet his firm conviction about the future man sheds off the charge of nihilism that is thrown against him.

We find the resounding sound of the romantic attitude of Kierkegaard in thinkers like Rabindra Nath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Rabindra Nath Tagore finds the finite man losing his personal identity becomes identified with the infinite and becomes a Perfect Man who realizes his presence in all his activities. He thinks that what is needed now is to nourish and to cultivate the innate humanity residing in us. For him, "Man is also ever claiming self-renunciation from the individual units".¹³ We have to make real the Upanishadic call for to be existent from non-existence and to be immortal from mortality. We have to achieve Eternity for which we have to be reborn. He looks upon life as self-realization. We have to awaken the dominant divinity within each of us which will enlighten the path for achieving universal brotherhood. This achievement will find out the real meaning of life. He thinks that the ultimate goal of life is

the communion with the Infinite and this feeling of communion is only possible through intuitive inner-vision. This remaking and refashioning of mankind is urgently necessary. This task is too tough no doubt. We should not loose heart as religious discipline can shoulder this task to pave the path for the emergence of a new world and society. It will awaken the new spirit of humanity. The awakened state of consciousness makes man feel his incompleteness which he will want to complete man's immense potentialities will at last conquer the kingdom of God¹⁴.

Rabindra Nath Tagore visualizes evolution as an unfolding process without any recess. For him, being so evolved man finds his interconnectedness with the whole of humanity. This needs evolution of the spirit of man where life marches onwards to gain perfection. Here his creative imagination and his love endeavours him for the renunciation of his baser self at the alter of the Transcendental Man who is really inhabiting in each and every man. Tagore views the Infinite in such a way that this Infinite is to be defined in terms of humanity which is associated with love and co-operation. To have the touch of this Infinite we have to shift ourselves from the ground of our secluded self-centeredness. Then and then only we can enter into the world of love and truth.

Tagore finds the man of his heart in the Bauls who have the authenticity of their religion in their life. Those Bauls have the aspiration for the expansion of their consciousness towards the Supreme Reality of Man which is waiting to be realized by all of us. For the Bauls, the self of man is finite but being the manifestation of the Infinite he is infinite. Man gains his completion more and more in his love towards his fellow being and the body of the individual self is the temple of the Divine. The central idea of the Bauls is union with the Divinity. For them, love illuminates the path by which we can realize the communion of us with the Divine. These Bauls realize that God is not a Beyond, as he is the Man of the Heart.

If we look at Sri Aurobindo then we find that Sri Aurobindo views that the mind is not purely a logical power. It urgently needs subrational forces like

desires, passions, associations, prejudices and prejudgements which will impair the logical power. For Sri Aurobindo, the agnostics are determined externally by objects. The thesis that we can deduce from this is that Aurobindo's concept of man takes a good account of the projective mental power which can account for imagination. For Sri Aurobindo¹⁵, the constituents of thought have two separate attitudes that is – judgement or reasoning and the other is imagination. These two sides are the most necessary components of perfect ideation. He recognizes that mind is fully equipped to deal with the actualities and with the imagination of the mind. This imagination of mind can summon possibilities and paves the path by which 'the may be's becomes 'might be's. The mind with the flight of his imagination can reach the height of the Truth – consciousness. At this present stage, man with his flight of imagination, which though is in the process of becoming, will enrich himself with the possession of truth – consciousness. Man's physical existence, in his view, is a system of responses, of which man has the least mastery.

For Sri Aurobindo, the mind of man can reach the Beyond by himself, since the mind is intimately gifted with a power of Ignorance which is lurking for the Truth. Man has the gift of self-exceedency by which he finds his link with a higher grades of consciousness. The mind, says Aurobindo, stands between a super-conscience and an inconscience, and receives power from both these opposite forces. Mind can only deal with the actualities because of his intermediate status on the ontological ladder. Mind can summon the possibilities as he has his own imagination which enlightens the way by which possibilities can be the actualities. The imaginary capacity figures the 'may be's and the 'might be's of the Infinite. Imagination is not purely illusory. The mind is perpetually ascending towards the truth consciousness. This impelling force of the mind impells him to have a truth consciousness.

(ix) Some Movements encircling the concept of man

It might be said be said that the last decade of the nineteenth century can be characterised by Evolutionism and Agnosticism. This new trend has given rise to a new empirical and secular temper which was articulated by a

group of thinkers in Britain to whom 'Mill's System of logic' is a sacred scripture and at the same time there are others who are critical against this scientific empiricism. Carlyle, Arnold and T. H. Green are the main figures to have this critical attitudes.

We now have to discuss some movements encircling the concept of man. One of such movements is Transcendental movement. Transcendentalism with its difficult conceptual problems still has its votaries and the leading voices are¹⁶ Henry Daniel, Thorean Brownson, Theodore Parker, Margaret Fuller, George Ripley, Bronson Alcott. Thorean's Civil Disobedience was figured predominantly in both Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Brownson was wholly interested in social aspect human life. Theodore Parker was a transcendentalist who has great effect on the course of unitarian history. Being a child of enlightenment he can be termed as a forerunner of positivism. These renowned transcendentalists have their eyes fixed on human problems like morality and social aspects of human life.

Then we can turn towards Tractarian movement, the unity of which is in its single spirit and common ethos where humanism widens itself. Modernism is the off-spring of the dissatisfaction, felt in the inadequacies of the Church's intellectual response to the needs of the modern age.

Romanticism offered a way round the more difficult epistemological problems. Coleridge, Emerson and Schleiermacher are the spokesmen for this new sensibility which made Romanticism one of the last great international movement of thought in the modern period.

This new rise of thought shows the rediscovery of feeling as a significant dimension of human nature. If we look to Soren Kierkgaard then obviously the picture that will be depicted before us is that Kierkgaard is a major figure whose vital insight into our understanding of Philosophy, religion and life is of great significance. His theory of existence which has a distinctive meaning, refers a transition from potentiality to actuality, Kierkgaard regarded man as a being who is in the process of becoming a full-fledged man.

From the above discussion so far made, it clear that man is yet not a man. He is in the process of becoming to be perfect man for which he is proceeding step by step in and through evolution. But to reach the last step of the ladder of perfection, he has to encompass the whole world with his love towards his fellow being.

The present man is not the beast of the past or the superman of the future as he is just a link between the two. Man with his mental gift of love, will overshadow all the differences that may have. The process of evolution and involution have witnessed the history of man where man has been awakened from his deep slumber of bare animality. He is now to be awakened towards the conscious stage of spirituality. In this awakened state of spirituality, man now can philosophize about world-society and world-solidarity where concord will reign supreme. If man can think about this world unity and world solidarity at present then the distance will not be too far to be actualised into reality. The history of man depicts this truth in innumerable facts and in innumerable occasions. So the concept of world-unity and world-solidarity will be actualised in the not-too-far future through man's love and feeling of concord.

For this reflective mind of Socrates, man is to become like God as far as it is possible for him. Man has his feeling of privation which will lead him for attainment of his full completion for which he has travelled a long journey. Man's awareness of his intrinsic significance makes him so unique and this uniqueness in him cries out for the Beyond. He is self-exceeding in his nature for which he prays:

"Asato ma Satgamaya, tamaso ma Jyotirgamaya, mrtyer mam amritam gamaya". (Lead me from the unreal to the real. Lead me from the darkness of light. Lead me from death to the eternal life).

Man suffers much for his internal conflict between his finitude and infinite in him. Man's inner world of spirituality would be encrowned with success and for the victory of spirituality man's activities are to be directed in the right way. This right direction of his action will make room for his attainment of perfect

manhood. The human nature is not fixed once for all. It is evolving more and more towards perfection which needs continuous nourishment. This process of becoming in man will surely actualise the emergence of the perfect man. This emergence of the perfect man will reveal all the dignity of his spirit which is already potent in him. This discovery of his real spirit which is leave no scope for any critical survey about the relationship between man and religion and will close the chapter of the question – whether man is a religious being or not.

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