

EVOLVING FROM A CIVILISED TO A SPIRITUALIZED SOCIETY

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Spiritual Significance : Beauty of Tomorrow manifesting the Divine
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*The frontiers of the Ignorance shall recede,
More and more souls shall enter into light,
Minds lit, inspired, the occult summoner hear
And lives balze with a sudden inner flame
And hearts grow enamoured of divine delight
And human wills tune to the divine will,
These separate selves the Spirit's oneness feel,
These senses of heavenly sense grow capable,
The flesh and nerves of a strange ethereal joy
And mortal bodies of immortality.*

Savitri, CWSA, Vol.34, p.710

Introduction

The present day humanity identifies man primarily as a mental being and in that capacity attempts to organize life, to perfect the society and to harness the environment for its benefit. The mind attempts to guide and instruct the lower members, viz. the vital and the physical to form what we know as a civilized society. A civilized order is aimed for society through proper governance with provision for a safe, happy and comfortable life. Man as a mental being has devised certain well intentioned social, political and economic systems, yet

the grossly transient nature of his accomplishments often puts him at unease and calls for seeking a deeper meaning of life and 'that' which governs it. It has started becoming apparent to humanity that the knowledge of the physical world is not the whole of knowledge and one will need to take an inward turn to find the true meaning and purpose of life. Society has very much been neglectful of the spiritual element - the true being in each individual, and this defect has significantly contributed to the imperfect nature of its achievements. The outer life is full of dualities, contradictions and presents a distorted and dim view of some inner reality which is the true, the good and the beautiful - the 'soul', which is not 'material' but also not 'immaterial' to human existence. Once we are able to realize the consciousness in our inner being it will be possible for us to illumine the inferior nature of our mental pursuits, vital instincts and the physical capabilities. The current individualistic trend will take a subjective turn through an inward turning to know the self in relation to the entire humanity and the Divine. A spiritualized society will be one in which each individual has fathomed the subjective secret of his soul and has discovered the Oneness in the entire creation. They will have realized a spiritual consciousness whose light will govern all individual and group thought, will and action.

Need for Spiritualizing the Self

Man has attained excellent results in his mental pursuits but perfection is what he needs for a lasting and meaningful survival of humanity. He is striving to attain that perfection through the mind which itself is an instrument that needs to become conscious of the Divine hand operating it, rather than mistake itself to be the sole doer. The discerning and reasoning mind needs to take some time off from a habitual persistent thinking to allow into itself, the influence of the all knowing and all comprehending soul power. It is when the mind opens up like a sunflower to the influence of rays coming from the soul that it will be able to lend spontaneity, beauty and rhythm to the outer life; else everything will remain only deftly created mechanization and manipulation which recursively calls for more of the same. Sri Aurobindo observes, "*This erring race of human beings dreams always of perfecting their environment by the machinery of government and society; but it is only by the perfection of the soul within that the outer environment can be perfected. What thou art within, that outside thee thou shalt enjoy; no machinery can rescue thee from the law of thy being.*"² Any rational social system devised in the best interest of the society has not really been able to solve its problems. At best it only fixes them and after a while has to devise a new system and make society adapt to it. We may thus go on creating rules upon rules; a rule to ensure that a particular rule is followed, another rule to ensure that the rule which ensures the following of that particular rule is followed and so on but a single negligence is enough to shatter the whole system. Reasoning grounded in the intellect cannot control and put things in order without a strict enforcement. Again, enforcement means making one comply with a system not by one's own reasoning but per force.

Sooner or later the individual will have to cast off the egoism which keeps it away from venturing into discovering the law of its own being and will someday realize that its body and form is in its deeper meaning an entity to express the divinity which is preparing to emerge in the process of evolution. Sri Aurobindo maintains that the human society, now rooted to the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment, must move in the 'subjective' direction and uphold 'the spiritual aim in life' which he explains - considers man 'as a social being incarnated for a divine fulfillment upon earth'. According to him, the two conditions necessary for the coming of a subjective age are that there must be aspiring individuals and there must be communities and 'group-souls', both united in a common spiritual endeavour.

The Coming of a Spiritualized Society

Man holds witness to the fact that the stress of the current state of affairs and the seeping in of a new thought with a promise of greater possibility have always been instrumental in bringing about revolutionary changes in society. Even with all sciences and technology put together there is a huge contradiction between the eternal human aspirations of "*God, Light, Freedom, Immortality*"³ and the usual common place life which experiences an egoistic consciousness, the darkness of ignorance, a routine see-sawing between pleasure and pain; happiness and sadness; success and failure and the predicament of sentence to death. The contradiction is so much that the aspired ideals stand attainable either by a determined revolutionary effort at the individual level or a gradual evolutionary progression. The level of aspiration among the individuals or groups will determine which course is taken by them. Sri Aurobindo writes, "*The world knows three kinds of revolution. The material has strong results, the moral and intellectual are infinitely larger in their scope and richer in their fruits, but the spiritual are the great sowings.*"⁴ The stage of man ruling man must pass and give way to a new principle of living where subjection implies freedom; a self-willed surrender to the Divine by turning inwards into the spirit to look for something far deeper than the individual or collective ego and beyond the little accomplishments of the material. It is to try and find the true self and to see how the individual and the collectivity are participating in the One, pervading Self of the Divine, which is the same and yet seemingly different in all.

Materialistic Society versus Spiritual society

The dimly lit path, on which humanity is unconsciously traversing as a materialistic society, can be illumined by Sri Aurobindo's deep and wide vision of the fundamental reality of existence, both individual and collective, and the principles governing their formation and evolution. The greatest spiritual-metaphysical truths that Sri Aurobindo realized through his spiritual vision and experience are applicable to the individual and collective life of

man. The supernal wisdom on the progression of the individual and the society is available to mankind in Sri Aurobindo's writings as he has made it communicable in the intellectual form, which makes a strong appeal to the reasoning mind of man who otherwise generally does not even find sense in thinking beyond the material aims of life. A spiritual society will be based on a new universal order with an inherent oneness in it. The mind will be the first to undergo transformation, followed by the vital and only in the last the body will undergo the nature of transformation suited to hold the new spiritual consciousness. Freedom and perfection will be the laws recognized by one and all, which in our present society are considered to be idealistic aims, far divorced from reality. Sri Aurobindo gives us the hope and the way to reconcile our idealism with realism, "*Man's true freedom and perfection will come when the spirit within bursts through the forms of mind and life and, winging above to its own gnostic fiery height of ether, turns upon them from that light and flame to seize them and transform into its own image.*"⁵ All the true, the good and the beautiful that we dream of for our present society will be inherent in the spiritualized society alongside its focus towards its newer aspirations. We will be one with the source of all our aspirations and will be able to connect with the One who is now veiled from us. The relations among the members of the society will be based not on fulfillment of needs and desires but on psychic love. A spiritual society would function towards extending their consciousness to other aspirants of the Divine Grace.

There will be truly compassionate and empathetic concern for others' requirements and it will not matter if one is doing something for oneself or for the other. People will have no reason to fear or doubt the intentions of one another. Money and power will not have any lure in a society which has attained the splendours of the utmost knowledge, freedom and bliss. If the concept of money is at all there to remain, it will be accepted and expended as a sacred trust with the true security and joy of selfless generosity and committed sharing. Solidarity will find its firm basis in the concept of all souls emanating from the Universal soul, coming together for a Divine task to form group souls and sub-souls. All work will be accomplished for the joy of doing and necessitated by love. There will be no need to curtail the freedom of people as they will hold their responsibility to be equally dear as their freedom is to them. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "*A large liberty will be the law of a spiritual society and the increase of freedom a sign of the growth of human society towards the possibility of true spiritualization.*"⁶ Religion will only be a bridge for the masses to step into the realm of a spiritual consciousness and will have no bindings. All that which in the present day is known to us as education, culture, ethics, art and esthetics will find their foundations in the true self and will be guided by intuition. People will not be prone to diseases as they will possess the necessary consciousness to prevent them. The concept of joy and pleasure will drastically shift from the idea of material success or of having a temporary pleasure or entertainment value to

an eternal bliss perennially supplemented by endless love flowing through the entire Being and the Becoming. Sri Aurobindo views man, society and humanity; individually and collectively progressing towards their grand spiritual destiny with all the social dynamics we witness in life leading to this singular aim.

Conditions for a Spiritualized Society

Sri Aurobindo sees two conditions which should be simultaneously satisfied as necessary for the change from a mental and vital to the spiritual order of life. There must be individual or individuals who are able to develop themselves in the image of the Spirit and to communicate both their idea and its power to the mass. There must also be a mass able to receive, follow and assimilate without stopping or falling back to accustomed ways. A closer look reveals to us that science and technology by creating an ease and rapidity of communication have enabled people across geographical boundaries to come together to form groups on the basis of similar thought and aim. We may be able to appreciate this preparation for the flowering of such cohesive groups who first take up the charge to enlighten the selves in the Spirit and extend the idea and the light to others who have prepared themselves at least in receptivity and possess the will to follow a new path undeterred.

There must be signals of a subjective turn in the human pursuits. The new thought based on light from the Spirit would express itself in philosophy and psychology and the beauty of the Spirit be revealed through the creative art forms like poetry, music, painting, dance and sculpture. The fine and the subtle ideas will percolate into the more utilitarian fields of politics, economics only later with some difficulty. With new realms and vistas opening up before mankind the new trend would be towards discoveries that bridge soul and matter. All achievements in the material would be subjected to inspection by the psychological and the psychic.

Conclusion

A spiritual basis is the only solution to a harmonized society and no outward machinery can ever be able to effectuate this; an inner change is indispensable. The significance of studying Sri Aurobindo's social philosophy lies in the fact that humanity in context of the social life of a community, nation or the world needs to grow aware of the aim that it is moving towards the overall plan for the Universe. This aim is at present quite obscure to it in spite of making huge strides in development of the various fields of knowledge. It is imperative for man to realize that he is yet not perfect in his nature and should willingly participate in Nature's yoga to surpass his present state to arrive at one which though seems abnormal to him is the normal state in his spiritual destiny. Though he is the

highest species in the process of evolution he should not mistake himself to be the creator and controller of this world which is rather a field given to him to work towards exceeding himself and aiding similar beings in the process. He has to work towards realizing his reality as a spiritual being so that the lower nature may be further perfected in its light. Man has the potential to bring down heaven upon earth but only in accordance with the divine principle and certainly not by some self-devised rules and mechanisms. Sri Aurobindo gives us a glimpse of our real spiritual self to which we are oblivious in the present human frame and should aspire to discover, "*Infinite, we are free from death; for life then becomes a play of our immortal existence. We are free from weakness; for we are the whole sea enjoying the myriad shock of its waves. We are free from grief and pain; for we learn how to harmonise our being with all that touches it and to find in all things action and reaction of the delight of existence. We are free from limitation; for the body becomes a plaything of the infinite mind and learns to obey the will of the immortal soul. We are free from the fever of the nervous mind and the heart, yet are not bound to immobility.*"⁷

References

1. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1997), Vol. 12 of Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, p.468
2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry:Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 2005), Vol. 21 and 22 of Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, p.4
3. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1998), Vol. 13 of Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, p.210
4. Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1997), Vol. 25 of Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, p.244
5. Ibid, p.228
6. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1998), Vol. 13 of Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, p.206

The individual cannot be perfect until he has surrendered all he now calls himself to the divine Being. So also, until mankind gives all it has to God, never shall there be a perfected society.

SRI AUROBINDO, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 466