CHAPTER - VII

CONCLUSION
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I have attempted throughout, in this treatise, to bring out a clear and critical exposition of Sri Aurobindo's concept of Social Development. A serious student of philosophy, in his search for conceptual clarification, or clarity of understanding sometimes stops at a point to remove the conceptual cramps, covering and disfiguring the real issue just as Truth is being covered behind the golden disc.¹ I, in my humble philosophical pursuit, saw a problem in the human existence itself, particularly in the context of his social relationship as the difference made by the existence of an individual could be best evaluated against the background of his social behaviour. The question still remained as to what actually counted as the qualifier for the idea of social behaviour or social existence. To my mind, neither science, nor sociology could give a satisfactory reply to the problem of human existence in the context of his social relationship.

In attempting to solve the riddle, I had to fall back upon the idea of adhering to certain values or ideals as the only way for the justification on the part of an individual to exist socially. Further, these values or ideals are also the determinants of social development apart from other factors. In order to elaborate and scrutinise this idea
of progress or development and distinguish it from others, I had to search for a model. But this model of social progress could not be assessed independently without considering the role of Nature. This prompted me to take Sri Aurobindo's idea of social development as a model because of its comprehensive character. It encompasses the relation between Man and Nature, individual and society. It also treats the problem of individual and social transformation aiming at human dignity and freedom inspite of the inscrutable laws operating in Nature. It might be argued, however, that individual freedom and social progress may not run in the same line.

In order to overcome this difficulty, I had to discuss the problem of individual freedom, Vis-a-vis the deterministic character of Nature. An individual, like Nature not only affirms but also exceeds itself. In other words, individual progresses step by step from vital to mental and from mental to spiritual, from infra-ethical to supra-ethical as Sri Aurobindo views it. While the vital man and the mental man have an immense effect upon the earth-life, the evolution does not cease there. It aspires for the higher-the spirit. While discussing the process of evolution two concepts, perfection and harmony arrested our attention.

In the line of the concept of Svadharma in the Bhagavad Gita it was argued that perfection of the individual consisted of self-realisation and harmony could be realised when
individual tunes himself to Nature and the finite being merges in the Infinite. It also means the harmony of material and spiritual. Thus it is not through renunciation, but through affirmation that one could attain perfection. This was discussed in the metaphysical scheme of Sri Aurobindo, particularly in his hypothesis of evolution. Certain important problems were raised in this context and were considered from different angles of vision. The objections from a scientist's point of view was particularly discussed along with the counters from the side of Sri Aurobindo. Against the backdrop of this deliberation, the Aurobindite model for social development was presented and a brief comparison was made between the Aurobindite hypothesis and some hypotheses offered by Materialists, particularly the Marxists. These alternate stand points were critically examined and it was observed that Sri Aurobindo's hypothesis deserved important consideration. I then came to place this hypothesis of Sri Aurobindo in a wider logical map. That is, I had to scrutinise its plausibility in the context of the idea of an ideal State visualised by the celebrated contemporary thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan. The choice of these thinkers was not arbitrary, but it was made on the ground of the affinity of views among these thinkers. It was observed that though their idea of society and social development were rooted in the upanisads,
particularly the Vedantic tradition of India, Sri Aurobindo's idea could not only stand the test of theoretical speculation, it could pass the test of practical experimentation as he recommended Integral Yoga as a definite direction to attain the goal of social development.

After projecting the Aurobindite model of ideal society, it was incumbent on my part to examine the logical status of the hypothesis. The important point of discussion was whether his hypothesis was a mechanistic or teleological one. It was observed that it could not be mechanistic due to its obvious defects. One could, however, concede to the teleological interpretation, though with reservations. That is, Sri Aurobindo's hypothesis could be interpreted in a demythologized way, rather than in a mythologized manner. In explicating this idea I came to the conclusion that though the evolution was purposive, it did not mean that it was the purpose of some ultimate Divine designer. This design or purpose speaks of a Vision splendid but this vision was not a mystic vision. It only spoke of an orderliness or co-operation in Nature which always strives towards some ends, such as freedom, morality, unity etc. which are the realities of the universe. Sri Aurobindo did not speak of any supramundane purpose. He was talking of a purpose which was quite inevitable in the natural evolutionary process.
After having discussed this problem, I was prompted to consider the different nuances involved in his idea of social development in way of a conceptual reconstruction. The purpose was two fold; negative and positive. The negative aspect was directed to remove certain conceptual cramps from the path of philosophical deliberation. Thus I had to focus the role of a philosopher, particularly in the context of a discussion on the idea of social development. It was my endeavour to show how Sri Aurobindo in applying his technique of conceptual analysis could be successful in removing certain misconceptions involved in the idea two negations and other problems such as the conflict between transcendental ascetism and materialistic hedonism.

In developing the positive philosophical attitude I had to risk myself as a student of philosophy to take up the stupendous task of reconstructing and analysing certain concepts. Thus my thesis was that the Life Divine of Sri Aurobindo is a postulate of his idea of social development. In the process I had to excavate the concept of a postulate and examine its different aspects particularly from the Kantian standpoint. My finding in this regard was that the Life Divine is a controlling idea of our practical life. The practical life which is reflected in our social existence needs a postulate. The picture of an ideal life which might be viewed as an abstruse metaphysical vision from the stand point of ordinary intellect was the kingdom of heaven in us, according to Sri Aurobindo. In the process
of this discussion it was necessary on my part to pay special attention to his idea of Integral Monism. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Monism as a novel idea regarding the various interpretations of vedanta, would excel all others in the sense that his monism comprehended and admitted the reality of matter and spirit, though evolution, according to him, was the evolution of spirit. This was, so to say, the integral evolution of Sri Aurobindo, quite different in its approach from the other theories of evolution advanced by other celebrated thinkers. I was required to discuss his idea of evolution in detail in order to project my idea that Sri Aurobindo's thought on evolution worked as an unverified and yet a plausible and meaningful postulate of his theory of social development. As against the problem, as to how a metaphysical hypothesis of which Sri Aurobindo was a great exponent, could operate as a guiding postulate of practical reason, I in my own way, could find that his uniqueness lies in transforming the scientific reality to a spiritual reality and that he could manipulate the conceptual tools to extend the scientific explanation to a metaphysical explanation.

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not far removed from the limits of reason. As it was
his idea that human reason does not bound itself to the
empirical level only. Man, with his capacity to trans-
cend himself can possibly extrapolate from the empirical
to the transcendental. He was not, to my mind, a mere
theoretical expert. The methods he recommended to
comprehend the wide spectrum of the Integral Monism
justified him as a practical thinker. His innovation of
the method of Integral Yoga deserved serious attention as
this distinguished him from other contemporary thinkers
like Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda etc. The method
of Integral Yoga which basically aims of the union of
the human consciousness with the Divine consciousness,
i.e., which aims at the transformation of man to divinity
falls upon two minimum conditions such as aspiration and
opening. This Yoga, which is known as purna-yoga is
nothing but gearing the vital, mental and the spiritual
aspects of an individual to have a communion with the
Divine.

The other significant aspect of the Life-Divine
is that it goes a long way in avoiding the possible
conflict between individual progress and social progress
since leading divine life presuppose that one should
cross all the barriers. Similarly a society developing
in conformity with the model set by Sri Aurobindo also
provides congenial conditions for the life and growth
of the individual. To put it in a nutshell, a society, controlled by the spiritual ideal and orientating towards this ideal could only be termed as an ideal society and it was the best possible society to overcome all stigma and avoid all conflicts. Life Divine being the transcendental presupposition of this hypothesis of social development or progress makes it singular and unique hypothesis in this regard.

I started with a simple problem relating to human existence, particularly with reference to his interpersonal relation and found that the ideal human relation could be established in the hypothesis of an ideal society and its development envisaged by Sri Aurobindo. The best social order according to Sri Aurobindo is the Divine order which is not removed from the human order, it is rather the elevation of human order to a higher state. It was the synthesis of Divine and the human, so to say. The hypothesis advocated a sort of Divine Humanism. The hypothesis was then exposed to critical evaluation. However, in the process of scrutinising my own work it was also necessary to discuss certain criticisms against the spiritual Weltansschauung of Sri Aurobindo in general and the idea of social development in particular. The hypothesis was exposed to criticism from the standpoint of
scientists and the sceptic. In the process, the religious belief was also scrutinised from their standpoint. Again Sri Aurobindo's idea of social development which centred round the problem of involution, that is the Divine being involved in matter, was also examined critically. My response in this connection was that whether the world of manifold was to be taken as the manifestation of matter or spirit depended upon interpretation. Of course, one could accept the spiritual interpretation if it could stand the test of plausibility and meaningfulness. It was seen that the idea of Divine life could pass this test as it is the postulate of his hypothesis of social development. Again it also works properly, like a scientific hypothesis, as it is able to predict the shape of things to come in future.

Another important criticism against his thought was that his method of Yoga enabling the spiritual aspirant to ascend from matter to spirit was a sort of picture thinking. But my reaction against this criticism was that his reasoning, like the reasoning of certain scientists in explaining their theoretical concept was analogical, but not subject to picture thinking. The last criticism, I considered, was against the concept of ideal society which, according to some critics, was ambivalent as it placed human aspiration on the one hand and the threats to the fulfilment on the other. In reply, it was pointed out that Sri Aurobindo
was conscious of various shortcomings on the path of the progress of society. He also recommended certain ways and means to remove the huddles on the path of progress.

After having considered the views of Sri Aurobindo in this treatise on which I have been working, I felt it necessary to focus my attention on certain other allied areas of thought of the great thinker in order to show that Sri Aurobindo is relevant in many ways. His relevance was viewed from two important standpoints. Firstly, it was observed by me that he occupied an important place as a philosopher due to his critical insight to the problems and the nature of arguments he had applied to establish his views. The second point of consideration was his extra-philosophical relevance. The dimension of his thought is so wide that it was very difficult on my part to encompass his great vision. However, within a short span, I could restrict myself to a discussion on his views on the important elements of Indian culture which included his views on education, woman freedom etc. At last, I saw Sri Aurobindo as a great hope for the future humanity as to my mind he was not only a great reconciler of the Eastern and Western views, he was, so to say, the future Man, the New Light for the humanity at large.
In reviewing my own work, I can say this much that I have said a little, leaving many untold stories. In my small attempt, might be insignificant one, I have ventured to understand the vastness of thought of a great thinker like Sri Aurobindo within a short compass. As Kant points out:

Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore but which, as transcending all its powers it is also not able to answer.²

However, I have made an humble attempt to understand the problem and evaluate it critically wherever it was necessary. Understanding a situation is grasping the point or meaning. Thus, I have tried to understand the point or meaning in the hypothesis. As Peterswinch remarks:

'Understanding' in a situation like this, is grasping the point or meaning of what is being done or said. This is a notion far removed from the world of statistics and causal laws.³

In understanding a theory or a hypothesis or a situation what is required is to see whether it passes the test of intelligibility. But while doing this, one should not only
confine his attention to the standard of intelligibility fixed up by the hypothesis itself. One should also open his eyes to assess the counter-points that can possibly stand as formidable against the hypothesis. As Alasdair MacIntyre remarks:

All interpretation has to begin with detecting the standards of intelligibility established in a society. As a matter of fact no one can avoid using clues drawn from their own society.... It does not follow from this, as I have already suggested, that the descriptions used or the standards of intelligibility detected will always be internally coherent.  

I can say this much at this stage that I have examined the thesis from its own stand point, as well as from the stand point of opponents in order to propound that the work I have undertaken stands the test of intelligibility and coherence. However, viewing the hypothesis in this way one can just see what a tremendous impact the hypothesis has on our intellectual, moral, social and cultural life. We understand and interpret the world by employing certain concepts. Our perceptual experiences are not always enough to understand the riddles of human existence. We have to agree with Popper who remarks in the context of progress of science that;
Bold ideas, unjustified anticipations and speculative thought are our only means for interpreting nature.... And we must hazard them to win our prize.\(^5\)

Further, a metaphysical concept is also empirically significant if it brings out some ascertainable difference in our experience. As has been properly put by D.P. Chattopadhyaya:

A metaphysical concept is empirically significant and not empty if its use could bring about some ascertainable difference in the organisation of our (in this case social) experience.\(^6\)

One has to admit I suppose, that though the concept of social development of Sri Aurobindo is a metaphysical one it has played a key role in organising our social experience, particularly when it is viewed from Kantian standpoint.

In giving a new approach, approximately a Kantian approach, to the problem of social development it appears to me that I have seen the hypothesis in its proper perspectives and in doing so I have exposed myself to great hazards though, I must admit that, such a hazard has opened new vistas in the path of my serious intellectual pursuit.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Isa Upanisad, hiranmayenapatrena satyasvapihitam mutkham, XV, p.25.


