CHAPTER II

CONCEPT OF IDEAL SOCIETY:
CONTEMPORARY STANDPOINTS
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In our previous discussion it was proposed to discuss the concept of social development with a view to deal with the problem raised in that chapter. A question was raised regarding this, particularly in the context of Sri Aurobindo's general metaphysical view and his reference to the problem of social development. It was proposed that a comparative estimate of the views of the different contemporary philosophers such as Gandhi, Radhakrishnan, Vivekananda etc. was necessary since they have viewed the ideal society from different metaphysical perspectives. It is now incumbent upon us to study the problem from the standpoint of these alternate metaphysical standpoints. It is proposed to discuss Gandhian view at the outset as his metaphysical model is a harmonious integral model comprising both Divine and human elements. Gandhi, known significantly, is a practical Idealist. As a practical idealist he not only speaks of a value-based society, but also aspires his dream to be realised in the normal life of man. Social sciences are sciences of social action, but to say that it is a science of human action is not only to understand the theories of human action but to study the basic elements that are necessary for formation of the society. In this sense certain values are required both for the formation and growth of the society. However, it still remains as an open question whether such values are necessarily religious values. In this sense the discussion on relative values and ultimate value is necessary.
Bandopadhyaya makes a detail discussion on the different relative values. According to him:

There is, for instance, what may be called the school of Evolutionary Value Relativism (Hobhouse, T.H., Huxley, Julian Huxley) which argues that values are relative to the biological evolution of man. There is the school of Historical Value Relativism (Hegel, Marx) which maintains that values are relative to history as determined by the world spirit (Hegel) or Dialectical Materialism (Marx).

Then there is another kind of value-relativism which is known as sociological value-relativism (Auguste Comte, Durkheim etc.) which holds that values are relative to a given society only.

A cursory glance on the above views will show that they are dogmatic and one-sided in nature. The school of evolutionary value-relativism suffers from the obvious difficulties that values are determined by particular periods of human history. Again if values are determined by the biological evolution of man, then ethics or morality will be determined by human behaviour from time to time. A close look at the 'Historical development theory' will establish that values are determined by the world-spirit at a particular period of history. In such case social values will be determined by a dominant personality. But this robs of freedom or moral choice as man becomes a puppet in the hands of a great personality. Once this freedom of moral choice is lost in the oblivion, the values cease to be
values. Finally, if it is stated that values are wholly or primarily determined by a given social system, then the social system assures the character of a controlling organism above and beyond the range of human freedom and creativity then the social system itself is in jeopardy as social system itself is largely the product of contemporary values. I

If on the other hand, by the term 'relativity' no determinism is implied, and a substantial freedom of choice with regard to values is conceded, then values cease to be relative to anything except whatever ultimate norms men in their freedom set for themselves. Logically, there is no other solution to the problem of values,...

In this context it is necessary to have a discussion on the Gandhian theory of social values which comprehends relative and ultimate values, particularly in the context of an Ideal society.

While we discuss the Gandhian theory of values we find that Gandhi not only speaks of the relative values, he is rather is more emphatic upon the ultimate values. The question is, why does Gandhi speak of the ultimate values and what is the source of his theory of ultimate values. A close analysis of Gandhian thought will reveal that his idea of ultimate values are derived from the idea of God, Gandhi, though not a metaphysician in the strict sense of the term, has certain basic ideas about God and religion. His metaphysical idea consists of his belief in one uniting
principle of the universe which is God or Truth or Love. It is well-known that he speaks of Truth as God, not God as Truth. In other words, according to Gandhi, Truth is not merely an attribute of God, rather Truth is God.

He says:

It is not a blind love, for no blind love can govern the conduct of human beings ... that love then which governs every life is God.

I do deemly perceive that while everything around me is ever changing, everdying, there is underlying all these change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together that creates, dissolves and recreate. That informing power of spirit is God ... In the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth, Truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is life, Truth and love.

Thus it appears from the above that Gandhi accepts God or the ultimate Truth as the Reality. And this ultimate Truth is God which determines the ultimate values. One finds here a distinction between Gandhi and Marx regarding the question of our concern for ultimate values. The ultimate value becomes an utopia both for Marx and Gandhi. For Karl Marx the ultimate value is the class-less, state-less ideal society. Marx wanted the proletariat to seize and smash the political super structure of
capitalism through a class struggle against the tyranny of the capitalist. The Gandhian utopia, on the other hand, though state-less, class-less and conflict-less, is simple, self-sufficient and living in harmony with nature. As Bondopadhyaya remarks:

It's horizontal organisation would consist of oceanic circle of self-governing villages based on better system of exchange, agriculture and handicrafts, subsistence living, a high level of moral and spiritual well-being. Since the ultimate values would be consummated or instantiated in such a society, Gandhi called it Rāmrajya, Divine rule (kingdom of heaven) in which there would be sarvodaya (equal development of all) and Purna-swaraj (full freedom for all).  

It clearly shows that Gandhi speaks of an ideal society 'Sarvodaya' which not only means the all-round development of every individual but it speaks of natural harmony between the individual and the society. Though he speaks of a class-less and conflict-less society, he sharply differs from the operational technology of Marx and Mao-tse-Tung. The realisation of his social ideal is through a non-violent struggle called Satyagraha or adherence to Truth.

One has to ponder a while over his concept of Truth which is so very important in Gandhian metaphysics. The question arises, does Gandhi speak of the ultimate
Truth alone which is completely abstracted from the empirical? To my mind, Gandhi, though a votary of ultimate truth, does not drift himself away from the empirical. When he speaks of the ultimate value, the inner-voice etc, he speaks like an abstruse metaphysian. But when he speaks of his experiment with Truth, he is not a pure metaphysican. He is also close to Nature, particularly to the human affairs. Rather Gandhi is more a naturalist and a humanist than a transcendentalist. His transcendentalism is evident when he declares that God can not be proved or disproved by reason. His view on naturalism and humanism is more evident from his analysis of social infrastructure and the making of an individual, as an ingredient of the total social fabric. This indicates that his idea of ultimate value is the controlling idea of the ideal society. We shall see, in what follows, that this ultimate value is justice.

It is difficult to understand how the ultimate values are related to the social order which is empirical in nature. It is common to analyse the empirical order through the values that are empirically meaningful, but it is difficult to understand how the ultimate values such as Truth, Non-violence, God etc. can have any empirical implication. The question now is, are we to exclude ultimate values from the discussion on the Gandhian concept of Ideal
society. If we exclude these values from the scope of our discussion then we cannot be faithful to the spirit of Gandhi's concept of society. On the other hand, if we stick to the ultimate values envisaged in the Gandhian thought, then there is every apprehension of drifting away from a consistent approach to the social order. Thus we are at a fix to give a faithful and yet plausible treatment of Gandhian thought. We can do no better at this juncture, then to understand the exact implications of the values which are not only eulogised but have been held at highest esteem by Gandhi. It has been held by Richard and Gregg that though Gandhi was not a scientist in the strict sense of the term, he was a great social scientist as he had the acumen of experimenting his ideas such as truth, non-violence, satyagraha etc. in his personal life, as well as in the society. According to Gregg:

He is not a mere scientist, he is a great scientist in the realm of social truth. He is great because of his choice of problem, because of his methods of solution, because of the persistence and thoroughness of his search and because of the profundity of his knowledge of the human heart.  

One should understand that the ultimate values Gandhi speaks of might appear as utopian but he had deduced such conclusion from these so-called utopian ideals that he could translate them to practice.
The ideal social order which Gandhi conceived of was rooted deeply in the Indian Vedāntic tradition which owes its origin to the upanisadic thought. The Ṛṣi Upanisad opens with the celebrated verse which says that the Lord God pervades the whole universe, both here and hereafter—'Om Ṛśāvāsyam midam sarvam yat kinccha jagatvām jagat'. This verse is, so to say, the bed-rock of the Indian vedāntic tradition. Gandhi draws the conclusion that since God pervades every thing there is no difference between God and the universe. This is the greatest Truth of all in the metaphysical scheme of Gandhi. From this it follows that inspite of all individual differences the basic unity of self and not-self has to be realised. This is also regarded as the real sense of emancipation or freedom. Of course, it is difficult to realise this sense of freedom and Gandhi was also conscious of it. But he was of the view that freedom can be attained and it is possible for a man to strive. As Bandopadhyaya points out,

From Gandhi's point of view, the Freedom not to strive is not true Freedom because he has a preconceived set of values, and the choice of not striving to attain these values robs man of his rational faculty and therefore, of his humanity.

This spirit of striving or enquiry makes Gandhi a scientist. With this spirit of enquiry he looks at
different values and that is why Gandhi is termed as a practical Idealist.

The social order which is an ideal order for Gandhi is articulated in his concept of swaraj. According to Gandhi, this concept is of great importance. He says,

let there be no mistake about my conception of swaraj. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends one of them is moral and social, the corresponding aim is Dharma, i.e. religion in the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity etc. but is superior to them all .... Let us call this the square of Swaraj which will be out of set if any of its angle is untrue.\(^8\)

Again he says,

the Swaraj of my conception will come when all of us are firmly persuaded that our Swaraj has got to be one, worked and maintained through Truth and ahimsa alone. True democracy or swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonist. That does not make for individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play under a reign of unadulterated ahimsa.\(^9\)
The concept of swaraj and along with it the concept of sarvodaya highlights the idea of the Ideal social order visualised by Gandhi. Radhakrishnan has rightly pointed out that swaraj is the basis of samrajya. The concept samrajya here means the society at large and swarajya means self-rule. In order to understand the implication of swaraj one has to understand the logic of this concept. First of all, swaraj is based on inward freedom which implies the absence of external coercion or compulsion. It involves fearlessness. In a sarvodaya society or a society which envisages the inward and outward elevation and upliftment of all its members, the role of individual is of great importance. That is exactly the reason why Gandhi pointed out that swaraj belongs to the individual alone. It is the individual to whom swaraj belongs. According to him "the individual is the one supreme consideration".

Again Swaraj not only belongs to the individual, but it depends on the eternal vigilance of the individual. The most important ingredient of this sarvodaya samaj or swaraj is that it involves equality. The freedom of the individual can not be regarded as fundamental unless there is a prior acceptance of the hypothesis that all men are equal. The Gandhian conception of freedom,
therefore, includes the notion of equality. Freedom and equal development of all which Gandhi calls *saryodaya* are interchangeable terms. Without equality, i.e., social, political and economic, there can be no true freedom. Thus Gandhi dreams of a society where there should be freedom of all, and social political and economic equality of all the individual members. 

In the metaphysical system envisaged by Gandhi, the role of non-violence cannot be lost sight of. This is also the conclusion which follows from the basic hypothesis stated earlier. Thus *swarāj* involves non-violence. The *saryodaya* society which represents universal freedom must be necessarily based on non-violence for non-violence alone as Gandhi insists, can preserve and promote freedom. One might ask here, why non-violence has been accepted as an essential corollary to the concept of the all-pervasiveness of God? To this the reply from Gandhi's side would be that if God pervades all, then one can not afford to love God, which one ought to do as God is love, and nourish a sense of hatred or violence towards his created being. Therefore, the idealistic society is based upon this supposition that one must have to accept non-violence not only as means but as an end to be realised in the ideal society. The violent way would inevitably lead to dictatorship
according to Gandhi. The reason is that,

True democracy or the swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonists.  

From his conception of swaraj Gandhi drew its logical consequence and brought it to the grassroot level. He envisaged that every village must be a republic. As he says;

My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbour for its own vital wants and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is necessary.

With this view of bringing democracy to the grass-root level Gandhi also conceived of panchayatraj.

According to him every village will be a Republic or panchavat having full powers. Thus every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will also be trained and prepared to perish in its attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. The most important thing to be noted here is
that in this ideal swaraj, the individual plays a significant role as the basic unit. This society where the individuals should be physically, morally and spiritually elevated, is necessarily a highly cultured society. When we talk of the moral and the spiritual growth of the individual, the basic presumption, according to Gandhi, is that each one must be truthful and non-violent in his approach and exercise. According to him,

This society must naturally be based on Truth and non-violence which in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God, meaning a self-existent, all-knowing living force which inheres every other force known to the world... 14

From the analysis of the Gandhian concept of society two things are most important. The ideal society which Gandhi envisages is based on certain ultimate values such as Truth and non-violence. This makes Gandhi an ideal thinker. But his idealism has stood the test of time. Therefore, he has been termed as a practical idealist. The other important aspect of the Gandhian concept of ideal society is the relation between individual and society. It is significant to note that in the metaphysical and the social scheme of Gandhi, individual occupies a very significant place. The obvious
reason for it is that Gandhi was an ardent advocate of liberty and justice. He not only inculcates the spirit of freedom in national life, rather his idea of freedom is extended to each and every individual who is the most important ingredient of society.

After having discussed the Gandhian concept of swaraj, grām-swaraj etc. it is to be observed that the Gandhian model of democracy worked at two levels evolving from a lower level to a higher level. According to him, state and government which rules the individual by enforcing laws is not necessarily an insignia of an ideal society. Thus at one stage Gandhi also advocates the abolition of state. This is the higher level of the idealised democracy, popularly called by him as Rāmarāja. Rāmarāja is the highest type of the idealised polity where there would not be any state or government to regulate the right of individuals. The other level of polity, which works at the lower level or the grass-root level is the sub-ideal level which would have a government that would permit maximum freedom to the individuals. The two forms of democracy are not actually two water-tight compartments. It would be proper, therefore, to say that the lower level of democracy is the preparatory stage for the realisation of Rāmarāja. Rāmarāja is the final stage where ethical considerations only would govern the life of the individuals. However,
that does not mean that the role of morality is neglected at the lower level. As Patil and Anikiri remark;

In a sense, Gandhi's model of democracy involved a movement along a continuum of an idealised state from the sub-ideal to the ideal.\textsuperscript{15}

An overall assessment of Gandhian thought clearly marks a deviation from the ideal society stipulated by Karl Marx. The view of Marx has to be understood against the backdrop of German idealism propounded by Kant and Fichte. Marx was an ardent critic of the idealistic view which was based on his historical approach to things. The materialism of Marx is based on the first premise which is that the most significant fact is the existence and labour of the human individual. Marx states his own position in his polemic against the idealistic tradition which says that everything is determined by rationality or consciousness. In elucidating the Marxian position, Chattopadhyaya remarks;

Marx's own conclusion is that the real life-situation is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by the former. Existence is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by existence. Disembodied consciousness is the product of the empty and abstract speculation of the metaphysician.\textsuperscript{16}
Marx speculates a society where at the final stage the state withers away. This might appear to be quite similar with the Gandhian concept of ideal society that is रामराज्य or पुर्ण स्वराज but the basic difference is that Marx diametrically differs from Gandhi in both the aspects stated earlier. First of all when Gandhian society is a value-based society, Marx removes the role of value from his conceptual framework. Secondly, when as a votary of liberty, Gandhi places individual freedom at the top, Marx turns him to a mere cog in the wheel. The other significant point is that when for the realisation of the ideal society the means is more important than the end for Marx the end determines the means. This is the basic difference which makes Gandhi an advocate of non-violence and peace.

THE CONCEPT OF AN IDEAL SOCIETY ACCORDING TO VIVEKANANDA:

So far we have considered to some extent the Gandhian concept of ideal society with a view to project an alternate model, different from Sri Aurobindo's concept of ideal society. It has been observed that the Gandhian concept of सर्वोदय, though rooted deeply in the Vedantic tradition of India, is an utopian hypothesis. The two levels of श्वाराज as conceived by Gandhi are spiritually meaningful
but their practicality is a matter of doubt. Gandhi gives us a direction to realise the higher ideal, but he has not clearly articulated the ways and means to realise the goal. Another hypothesis regarding the ideal society has been advanced by Vivekananda which also owes its inception to the traditional cultural heritage of India.

Vivekananda is famous for his practical Vedānta. According to him the Advaita Vedānta of Sankara is great but its metaphysical tenet can be conceived only by intellect. Vivekananda wants the Vedanta to be practised and lived by everybody. Spiritual life is not the monopoly of saints and sages. Its scope is infinite. Thus Vivekananda aims at the realisation of Vedanta in our social as well as individual life. While considering the relation between individual and society, the most important point of discussion has been the role and importance of the individual. Like Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi, Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan etc. pin down their absolute faith on the solid foundation of Vedanta. In the social scheme of Vivekananda the dignity and glory of the individual is kept in tact as was the case with Leibnitz in western philosophy. Thus in the ideal society conceived of by Vivekananda the individual and the society have both become glorious.
VIVEKANANDA AS A SOCIALIST:

It is a point of dispute whether Vivekananda was actually a socialist or not. One of the ardent follower and the younger brother of Vivekananda treated him as a socialist though Vivekananda himself made a half-hearted remark that he himself was a socialist. But the question is, how are we going to treat Vivekananda as a socialist when he himself is a great traditionalist and a spiritual thinker? In order to assess the exact position of Vivekananda, one has to discuss the variations of the term 'socialism'. Ordinarily, 'socialism' is a term attributed to the political philosophy of Karl Marx. As Santi L. Mukherjee remarks:

The difficulty of presenting a clear cut view of socialism is more or less three-fold. In the first place, socialism implies not only a body of doctrines but a movement as well. In the second place the doctrines are both political and economic in their import. In the third place, socialist, beginning from those who are commonly referred to as utopians...... have always been very much opposed to one another both as regards aims and methods of socialism.

Vivekananda is considered as a socialist not exactly in the Marxian sense, but in the sense that according to
him man is born free and he has to live in a free society with a sense of dignity. This theory of socialism is articulated in his agreement with Marx regarding the establishment of proleto-cult or Shudra rule. According to Marx, it would occur at the highest stage of capitalist development when because of the inner contradiction of capitalism, the concentration of capital on the one hand and the organisation of the proletariat on the other hand, would reach the climax. According to Vivekananda, on the other hand, when the cycle of caste is completed and lead in this regard is given by the country to shudras where the shudras are most oppressed and exploited the society will be in a position to be controlled by the rules of social justice. But the question is, why does Vivekananda give importance to the shudra-rule? The answer is very clear. The only criterion is dismantling the traditional conflict between Brāhminism and the Shudra-cult. Vivekananda here falls back upon the concept of equality which is again an offshoot of the Vedantic tradition of Isāvāasyam Idam Sarvam. Thus his socialism may be defined simply as Egalitarianism and largely equated with democracy in the full sense of the term. However, Vivekananda points out that in his ideal-state the shudra must have the quality of a Brahmin. In depicting the character of a Brāhmin the Dhammapada says;
Him or Her I call a Brahman for whom, there is neither this shore nor that shore, nor both, who is free from fear and from shackles. 19

Vivekananda himself says;

Our ideal of high birth, therefore, is different from that of others. Our ideal is the Brahmin of spiritual culture and renunciation. By the Brahmin ideal what do I mean? I mean the ideal Brahminness in which worldliness is altogether absent and true wisdom is abundantly present. 20

A close look at the above discussion shows two things. Firstly, Vivekananda's universal outlook transcends the boundaries of caste, creed and colour. Rightly speaking, his ideal is a secular ideal. Secondly, the individual in an ideal society must not only be physically sound like a Shudra to protect himself and give protection to others, but he must have the mental and spiritual excellence to regulate the social order. After having depicted Vivekananda as a socialist it is necessary to note that he is an utopian but not completely diverted from the reality. He believes in a society which might appear to be founded on an utopian ideal, but he has the realistic approach to the problem of inequality and exploitation of man by man. Though he believes in the emergence of the perfect classless society he does not ignore human frailty.
and declares that such a society will not be achieved till the moral compass of mankind is prepared through a spiritual elevation and that through a proper system of education.

**VIVEKANANDA AND THE IDEAL SOCIETY:**

The question now is what exactly is Vivekananda's concept of the ideal society and what is his view regarding social development or progress? Before we pass on to a discussion on the nature of social progress it is incumbent on our part to pause a while and consider the nature of ideal society as viewed by Vivekananda. It has been discussed above that Vivekananda's socialistic outlook is deeply rooted in the eternal Vedantic tradition of India. His view of an ideal society is also the outcome of the same tradition.

The philosophy of Vedānta to which Vivekananda's view belongs is the monistic philosophy though his monism is quite different from the spinozistic monism. While in the monism of Spinoza, God is lost in Nature, in the Monistic Philosophy of Vivekananda God is the indwelling spirit as well as the transcendent being. Thus with this background, he upholds a view of society which can be considered as organic in character. Society is, according to him, the family writ large. It is the aggregate of individual homes. However, this aggregate is not a mathematical
aggregate. That is, it is not merely a collection of the individual or individual wholes. His idea of society is that, it is a natural institution. To say that it is a natural institution it is not to say that the society is an eternal institution. Vivekananda does not subscribe to the idea that the society is created or ordained by God. He clearly maintains that society has not existed from eternity. What is most important is that the society which comes to exist by the union of the individual, is based on the cardinal Vedântic principle of unity. The resultant conception of this cardinal principle is the Advaitic vision of non-separateness of the vedânta philosophy as the breaker of all special privileges. In the course of his lecturer on 'Vedânta and Privilege' delivered in London he says:

The work of the Advaita, therefore, is to break down all the privileges. It is the hardest work of all and curious to say, it has been less active than any where else in the land of its birth. If there is any land of privilege, it is the land which gave birth to this philosophy-privilege, for the spiritual man as well as for the man of birth.  

This idea of Vivekananda dispels all doubt regarding the nature of ideal society. His conception of an ideal society is naturalistic no doubt, but it is a society
without barriers. The disparity between rich and poor, Brahmin and Shudra is removed altogether in the ideal society. Another most significant point is that, he contributes to the great theories of society upheld by the western thinkers that the ideal society must be a cultured society. A cultured society cannot be conceived of, if it is not based on the eternal values. Vivekananda, as a votary of vedanta philosophy, speaks of an ideal society or a state which is not possible without a harmonious combination of cultural values, the values of military rule and the ideal of equality. He puts this view in the following manner.

If it is possible to form a state which the knowledge of the priest period, the culture of the military, the distributive spirit of the commercial and ideal of equality of the last (Shudra) can all be kept in tact, minus their evils, it will be an ideal state.

Thus the ideal state of Vivekananda can be considered at par with the Platonic state conceived of in "The Republic". The difference however is that while Plato conceives of the harmonious ideal society without spelling out its solid foundation, Vivekananda makes his ideal society stand erect on the solid foundation of Advaita ideal.
THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL PROGRESS:

The concept of social progress follows from the Vedantic ideal again. It is important to note that the Advaita Vedanta not only gives us an ideal but also recommends the different ways and means to realise this ideal. The attainment of this ideal is the spiritual freedom and fulfilment. It is the direction of human evolution according to Vedanta. This method of approach to human evolution from the state of bondage to the state of spiritual freedom and fulfilment is reflected in the life of society.

How can this social progress, which is otherwise known as dynamic spirituality or a progressive human social order, be possible? The basic requirement for this is that there should be free-minded men and women, democratic and modern and endowed with character, efficiency who can accelerate that revolutionary process. This is the type of man and woman who must have achieved spiritual growth. Real spiritual growth is possible only when the outlook of the individual is expansive. In the words of Vivekananda 'all expansion is life, all contraction is death'. In the philosophy of Advaita the outlook which lands us in contraction is the resultant conception of avidya where as the expansive outlook is a step towards the realisation of the Brahman, because the real implication
of the concept of Brahman which is derived from the origin Brh is expansiveness. Society can progress from step to step only when the spirit of Vedanta is not only realised but is translated into action.

According to Vivekananda, this realisation will go a long way in removing all discords resulting from religious fundamentalism, cultural differences, geographical isolation and political turbulence etc. According to him the cultural and religious development in India has a mother heart which embraces people belonging to every religion and culture. Our age-old tradition is Samanvaya or Samayava, synthesis and harmony. Thus it is the ideal of 'Samayava év Sadhuh', which has held the Indian culture at a high esteem. As Swami Ranganathananda says;

This inspiring idea is the theme of one of the inscriptions of our Mauryan emperor Ashok of so early a period of history as the third century B.C. 23

Realisation of this alone will accelerate the social progress towards the unity as was envisaged in the vedantic tradition.

Before we offer a critical evaluation of the idea of Social progress of Gandhi and Vivekananda it is worthwhile to cast a cursory glance on the views of Radhakrishnan on
this issue. In his celebrated book *Idealistic view of life* Radhakrishnan presents a unique view of life which is again deeply rooted in the Indian cultural tradition, particularly in the vedantic ideal of Sankarāchārya. His view is that it is the unifying spirit or the Brahman which Vibrates in every sphere of human existence starting from individual to the social. Radhakrishnan's ideas arrest our attention for certain important aspects of his philosophical reflections. He is an ardent advocate of unity of religions, democracy as a great political ideal and geared everything for unity of mankind. According to him, the ideal social order is possible only when there is a realisation of the Infinite spirit in every walk of life. In his book *Present Crisis of Faith*, he speaks of democracy as a faith. No society can attain the height of glory unless democracy as a faith is translated into action. His idea of democracy is again based on the great spiritual ideal 'Vasudheiva Kutumbakam' or the world is a great family. In this sense, his views are similar with the idea of Vivekananda. This, according to him, is the new social order in the contemporary world, where the crisis of human existence is the resultant conception of the conflict in religions, caste, creed and colour. The only solution, according to Radhakrishnan, is the realisation of this Indian Ideal. We are not going to elaborate his ideas as there is a great affinity of
his views with the views of Gandhi and Vivekananda.

Before we pass on to the views of Sri Aurobindo it is necessary to critically reflect on the views discussed earlier.

A CRITICAL EVALUATION:

It is needless to point out that the views advanced by Gandhi, Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan are manifestation of the lofty ideal envisaged in the vedantic tradition. But it is important to note that Gandhi, Vivekananda etc. are not system-builders. They have not given a systematic treatment of the ideas they have developed. Nor also these thinkers have given any systematic alternate metaphysical model of social progress. At least they are not the system-builders like Hegel, Marx, Sankara etc. The credit of providing a systematic treatment of the subject goes to a great extent to Sri Aurobindo. However, these thinkers are thinkers of eminence who have inspired humanity down through the ages.

Both Gandhi and Vivekananda can be regarded as Utopians as they have not projected their ideals which can be practised. That is, even if they have given the ideal they have not clearly spelt out the ways or the methods of realising that ideal. It is one thing to
declare the ideal but another thing to realise it in practice. For realising the social unity or the unity of mankind, what is most important is that, the individual as a constituent of society must be prepared for contributing his mite to the realisation of the ideal. Neither Vivekananda nor Gandhi, nor even Radhakrishnan have distinctly pointed out the preparation of the individual for establishing the great social order. Society as an institution is neither Divinely ordained nor is it a game of dice. In other words, the social order is neither the outcome of supernaturalism (Daiva Vāda) nor is it the outcome of accidentalism (Yadrccāvada). It is a natural order (Swabha$\tilde{\text{v}}$ayada) In this Natural Order, there must be a process of acceleration to attain the social ideal they have envisaged. This process of acceleration must start with the individual. As Radhakrishnan rightly points out that the progress of the individual is from anna to annanda $^{24}$ i.e., from vital to the spiritual. But the question is how can this progress be there without the individual preparation for it? We shall see later on that Sri Aurobindo comes forward with concrete recommendations for the purpose.

It is gratifying to note that Mahatma Gandhi has given us certain concrete ideas regarding the nature of the Swaraj. But some of the ideas of Gandhi can not
stand the test of time, particularly when the society is heading towards industrial revolution and advanced scientific era. Similarly, even though Vivekananda contributes to socialistic ideal he has not come forward with a clear picture of the social order which he visualises. Moreover, both the thinkers, Gandhi and Vivekananda, have only set the ideal forgetting the negative side of the human existence which puts a stumbling block on the path of the realisation of the ideal. Thus it is necessary at this stage to ponder over an alternate metaphysical model given by Sri Aurobindo.

SRI AUROBINDO AND HIS UNIQUE METAPHYSICAL MODEL:

The metaphysical model of Sri Aurobindo, which is projected in conformity with the Indian cultural heritage, is unique in its own way. His concept of the Ideal social order is of course rooted in the Absolutistic metaphysics of Vedanta. But as different from the Gandhian and Vivekanandaite concept of social order, it gives an integral view of society which is spiritual at the base, but scientific in its progress. It has been discussed earlier that Sri Aurobindo aims at the search for the Divine in man which is always inherent in it. This search for the Divine can lead him from the realm of diversity to the realisation of unity. Diversity among man and in Nature is a phenomenon which can not be lost sight of. And yet,
this is not the final word so far as human progress is concerned. Thus Sri Aurobindo presents a view of society and social progress which is in line of the realisation of the Divinity in every walk of life. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo sees a purpose in every sphere of existence. The purpose is the Divine purpose only, Vedānta, particularly the Advaita Vedanta, speaks of Sarvam Khātu idam Brahman. According to Sri Aurobindo the Brahman is not only inherent in every grade of existence, it manifests itself through an evolutionary process. This evolution, however, is different from the theories of evolution advanced by the Biologists at different periods of history. While these Biologists, basing their arguments on reason, speak of the evolution of the species or life, as the case may be, Sri Aurobindo clearly upholds the unique view of the evolution of the spirit which is, according to him, the Infinite spirit or the Brahman.

It has been indicated earlier that Sri Aurobindo's ideas of social order are not merely scattered ideas. He builds up a system of metaphysics which stands on the strong foundation of the spiritual weltanschauung. As a system builder, he not only projects the idea but also recommends the methods of the realisation of the ideal. Like Mahatma Gandhi, he starts with the grass-root level. The grass-root here is the individual himself and the method of the preparation of the individual is Yoga or the integral development of the individual and the purpose is to attain
the state of unity of the humanity. This unity does not come as a bolt from the blue, it is attained step by step, such as; through administrative unity, economic centralisation, legislative and social centralisation etc. In expressing his view Sri Aurobindo says:

Mankind upon earth is one formost self-expression of the universal Being in His cosmic self-unfolding. He expresses, under the conditions of the terrestrial world he inhabits, the mental power of the universal existence. All mankind is one in its nature, physical, vital, emotional, mental and ever has been in spite of all differences of intellectual development ranging from the poverty of the Bushman and the negroid to the rich cultures of Asia and Europe, and the whole race has, as the human totality, one destiny which it seeks and increasingly approaches in the cycles of progression and retrogression it describes through the countless millennia's of its history. 25

In elaborating his views as to how this ideal can be realised in the life of the individual, Sri Aurobindo recommends;

True, his life and growth are for the sake of the world, but he can help the world by his life and growth only in proportion as he can be more and more freely and widely
his own real self. True, he has to use the ideals, disciplines, systems of co-operation which he finds upon his path; but he can only use them well, in their right way and to their right purpose if they are to his life's means towards something beyond....

In the chapters following an attempt will be made to expound and critically evaluate this idea of Sri Aurobindo with a view to project his unique metaphysical model. But prior to that it is necessary to consider at some length the idea of social progress and some alternate models such as scientific, mechanical, teleological etc.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


3. His recorded message to the America from London in Sept., 1931.


26. Ibid., p.60.