Chapter III

THE MATERIALISTIC AND SPIRITUALISTIC ASPECTS

The ancient thinkers made many attempts to find the reasons for persistence and change. The Upanishads, some three thousand years, looked up on the 'Brahman' as the ultimate reality and 'Atman', the self as a part of Brahman. This idea is expressed in the great sayings (mahavakyas) of the Upanishads as 'tat-twam-asi' (thou art that), and also as 'aham brahma asmi' (I am Brahman). The self as well as the universe are real (satya) and permanent (nitya).

But Buddha's view was different. He developed the doctrine of momentariness (Kshana-bhanga vada) and impermanence (anityatwa) and asserted that nothing lasts longer than one instance. Buddha declared that the self is not permanent; it is undergoing changes almost constantly. Thus, Buddha postulated a changing self as a protest against a static, permanent self presented in the Upanishads.

"Whatever exists is, momentary, by virtue of its existence, as for example the earthern vessel. All things about the momentariness of which, we are discussing are existents and are therefore momentary".
Ratnakirti is trying to prove the momentariness of all existence (sattva), first, by the *concomitance* discovered by the method of agreement in presence (anvaya vyāpti) and then by the *method of difference* by proving that the production of effects could not be justified on the assumption of things being permanent. Hence accepting the "Doctrine of Momentariness" as the only alternative.

To say that everything is impermanent is also to say that everything is in constant flux; that everything is constantly changing.

It can also be seen that the "Māyā Vāda", the "Theory of Illusion" in Sankara Vedānta exhibits close relationship with the "Theory of Momentariness." This argument that everything is illusion, *indirectly* implies that everything is *temporary*; and also means that everything is *constantly changing*.

Coming away from the cosmic and coming to the *phenomenal* world, the Theory of Change is equally applicable to *human societies* as well. History is full of such examples; the beginning, flourishing as well as decadence of many civilizations. Frederick Nietzsche (1844-1900) refers to the Greek decadence, though Philosophy began very well in Greece for all the Western world to be proud of, there was the downfall of Greek
civilization, Western Philosophy had to wait long to flourish. Perhaps if Greek civilization had survived, Western Philosophy need not have gone through the dark period, where Philosophy got mixed up with Theology (a few names of reference are, St. Anselm, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas) etc.

It is because of the dynamic nature, societies undergo evolution. While the process of evolution goes on, there occurs many ‘puckers’ of lethargy and decadence. When such a decay happens to society, some human beings come up to leadership and then guide and guard their people. They cause social transformation. Moses the first prophet of Jews redeemed the Jewish society from the Pharaoh of Egypt, Prophet Isaiah united the Jewish community when the Jews were suffering under Babylonian captivity and Prophet Mohammad reformed the Arabs and established a new socio-religious order. All the so far Incarnations of Lord Vishnu were for reestablishing goodness and destroying evil in all societies. In each aeon (Yuga), as the Gita says, “when evil triumphs, the Lord Himself desends.”

Again, we see the Vedic rishis challenge the priests and their authority, Buddha challenged the Hindu Orthodoxy, Swami Vivekananda recited “Uttishtata Jagrata”, Sree Narayana Guru said “Educate.. that you may be free...” and many more in this regard. Mahatma
Gandhi, the Father of the Indian nation is one among those who has pioneered various reforms in the Indian society.

Obviously, there is an endless list of these. But, we can make a broad classification of Social reformers into two categories as *Materialistic social reformers* and *Spiritualistic social reformers*.

There had always been these differences; differences of two levels; Material and Spiritual, (more effectively called transcendental). To go deeper into the concept of social transformation, let us analyse these one by one: taking first the *Materialistic conception of social transformation*.

Cārvāka may be the first established Materialist in the history of Philosophy, closely followed by Epicurus (341-270BC) and others till Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872). From then on, the blanket term "Materialism" dissipates, and in the contemporary world of Philosophy, this terminology is seldom used. The present day materialists can be seen among post-modernist, post-structuralist etc.

When we talk about Social transformation at the material level, the name that strikes us first is that of Karl Marx. He had explicitly called for social
transformation. The Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.

Marx (1818-1883) points out that, philosophers of the past had only interpreted the world, which is a passive phenomenon. What is actually wanted of the philosophers is quite a different aspect, an active participation in the process of change. Perhaps Marx wants even more; that philosophers ought to strive to change the world.

For Marx, the world is not at all in proper order. This is amply explicated in his 'Materialistic conception of History' or as it is more popularly known; 'Historical Materialism'. Frederick Engels says

"...... The term "Historical materialism" designates that the view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all important historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into distinct classes, and in the struggle of these classes against one another."
Historical materialism sees social changes as economically determined thus involving in economic determinism and reductionism: finally paving the way to the concept of a base and superstructure thesis.

Marxian economic reductionism goes this way: there are various “epochs” in history, and each epoch is characterized by the “mode of production”.

Marx himself says:

“In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production constitute the economic structure of the society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life-process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness”.
In Marx’s analysis, we find human history as determined by different modes of production. Transition from one mode of production to another is an automatic process, inevitable as they claim. For Marx, there is a historical necessity: and that just cannot be avoided. In short, everything functions rather like clock work.

Marx seems to have been very ambitious with his theory of mode of production. The theory that everything is determined by an economic substructure seems to have invited criticism. It is suggested that Political Consciousness and Legal Consciousness are determined by the economic base. But then, when Marxism succeeded in backward Russia, the revolution failed in modern Germany. It was due to the fact that the German consciousness was not determined by an economic base- Thus the theory of economic determinism failed at that time itself. Subsequent developments have proved this fact in our contemporary world.

Sir Francis Bacon (1909-1992) is rightly called the progenitor of English Materialism. To him, Natural Philosophy is the only true philosophy, and Physics based on the experience of the senses is the chief part of Natural philosophy. Bacon quotes from Anaxagoras and his ‘Homoeomerieae’, Democritus and his “Atoms” and uses these works as his authorities. According to him, the senses are infallible and they are the source of all
knowledge. All science is based on experience, and consists in subjecting the data furnished by the senses to a rational method of investigation. Induction, analysis, comparison, observation and experiment are the principal forms of such a rational method.

Bacon may be called the First creator of Materialism. But in Bacon, Materialism still occludes within itself the germs of a many sided development. On the one hand, matter, surrounded by a sensuous, poetic glamour, seems to attract man's whole entity by winning smiles. On the other, the aphoristically formulated doctrine pullulates with inconsistencies imported from theology.

In the subsequent developments, materialism becomes delinked from theological overtones and becomes one-sided. Thomas Hobbes systematizes Baconian Materialism. Hobbes, as Bacon's continuator argues:-

"If all human knowledge is furnished by the senses, then our concepts and ideas are but the phantoms diverted of their sensual forms, of the real world".

After Bacon (1561-1626), Hobbes, Locke, Hume (1711-1776) and their Materialism, comes Agnosticism.
Engels calls Agnosticism as “shame faced Materialism”. He says that the agnostic’s “conception of nature is materialistic through out”.

The entire natural world is governed by law, and it absolutely excludes the intervention of action without it. The Agnostic admits that all knowledge is based on sensual experiences, but then an Agnostic is not sure about sensation and the qualities perceived. The Neo-Kantian agnostics would say that they may correctly perceive qualities, but can never know the “Ding-an-sich”, the thing-in-itself separately. Kant (1724-1804) mystifies the unknowable “thing-in-itself”, but then we find Hegel contradicting Kant saying that it is not necessary to know “thing-in-itself” separately. For Hegel, perception of qualities are sufficient to know “thing-in-itself”. Such may be a rough outline of materialistic history of philosophy, the most powerful among them still being Karl Marx, who not only systematizes materialism, but also calls for social change on the bases of his materialistic conception of history and his philosophy of Dialectical Materialism.

Apart from Materialism and Spiritualism, there is the concept of diversified social transformation. One such aspect of social transformation is “ideology”.

N. Machiavelli (1469-1527) is perhaps the first thinker who dealt with matters directly connected with Ideological phenomena. His acute observation in the political practice of princes and general human behavior in politics anticipates the development of the concept. Machiavelli wonders why men are very often partial in criticising the present. He says,

"As man's appetites change, even though their circumstances remain the same, it is impossible that things should look the same to them seeing that they have other appetites, other interests, other stand points ....... instead of blaming the times, they should lay blame on their own judgment."

Another important point made by Machiavelli is the way he links religion to power and domination. He is seen anticipating the critique of religious functions of social thought. He seems to wonder why earlier people were fond of liberty than his contemporaries. His answer is that the difference lies in the education which is based upon a different conception of religion:

"Our religion has glorified humble and contemplative men, rather than men of action. It has assigned as mans highest
good humility, abnegation, and contempt for mundane things.... This pattern of life, therefore appears to have made the world weak, and to have handed it over as a prey to the wicked, who run it successfully and securely since they are well aware that the generality of men, with paradise for their goal – consider how best to bear, rather than how best to avenge, their injuries”.

Machiavelli also tells about the use of fraud in order to get and maintain power. According to him, princes must learn to practice deceit since force is insufficient. While there is hardly a case of humble man who acquires vast power “simply by the use of open and undisguised force ”, this “can quite well be done by using only fraud ”. While the exercise of power requires such good qualities as the honouring of one’s word, compassion and devoutness, the prince need not have all of them, but “he should certainly appear to have them”. Even more, “his disposition should be such that, if he needs to be the opposite, he knows how, became, every one sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are”

Machiavelli’s contribution to political practice is complemented by other developments in the field of science. With the disintegration of medieval society, a
new scientific approach to knowledge of nature receives impulse and begins to supercede scholastic philosophy. Values of practical functions and thoughts become more important. The development of commerce, money exchange, secularized education, ethics and so forth, lead to a new consideration of knowledge in its social and historical perspective. A precise and unbiased knowledge of nature is needed for attaining a mastery over such a study, and this becomes the overwhelming preoccupation of intellectuals. In short, the beginning of science is necessarily accompanied by a critique of former method of cognition.

Sir Francis Bacon’s “Novum Organon”(1620) and Rene Descartes’ “Discourse de la methode”(1637) are among the first methodological writings begun systematically to doubt traditional approaches to science. Both are concerned with the need of a new methodology which aim to overcome the shortcomings of Aristotelian medieval thought. Descartes remains at a more philosophical and deductive level, and Bacon emphasizes the role of positive sciences and their observational character. He wants to supercede Aristotle’s “Organon” with a new “Organon” which no longer insists on a deductive formal logic in the approach to reality but replaces it with an inductive approach.
For Bacon the observational knowledge of Nature cannot succeed unless it is rid of certain *irrational factors* which beset the human mind, the idols or false notions which obstruct human understanding and prevent it from reaching the Truth. There are four classes of idols; the idols of the tribe, the idols of the cave, the idols of the market place, and the idols of the theatre. The first two are *innate* and cannot be eliminated, they can only be *recognised*. They operate spontaneously in the process of cognition in such a way that human understanding resembles a warped mirror "whose shapes and curvature, change the rays of objects, distorting and disfiguring them" \(^{12}\).

The influence of Bacon upon the philosophies of 17\(^{th}\) and 18\(^{th}\) century is decisive. Marx later acknowledges Bacon as "the Father of modern science and English materialism"\(^{18}\). Philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, Cadillac, Helvetius, Holbach, Diderot, bear the mark of his theory.

Hobbes says that man can only conceive what has first been perceived by senses. "Consequently only material and finite things are intelligible to human intellect; there cannot possibly exist an idea or conception of anything *infinite*. In other word, man can know nothing about the existence of God"\(^{13}\).
The French enlightenment thinkers Helvetius (1715-71) and Holbach (1723-89) forcefully put forward their theories of priestly deceit. They say that the priests are interested in keeping people in ignorance so that they can exploit the laymen's power and riches. There is a kind of conspiracy against the people by the priests and that can only be destroyed by education.

Auguste Comte (1798-1857), one of the founders of Positivism develops his critique along the lines which Bacon had set up two centuries before. Just as Bacon struggled against idols and wanted to create a science based on empirical observation, Comte seeks to rid science of imagination so that it can discover the invariable natural laws of all phenomena. Comte says:

"the theological and metaphysical states of any science possesses one characteristic in common – the predominance of imagination over observation. The only difference that exists between them under this point of view is that in the first the imagination occupies itself with super natural beings and in the second with personified abstractions." 14

Comte thinks that from the historical study of human intelligence, he has discovered a fundamental
law. According to him, our conceptions and theories pass through three different stages of development:

"One, the theological or the fictitious,
Two, the metaphysical or the abstract, and
Three, the scientific or positive".  

Comte wants to replace philosophy with science; He says "the positive method had already happened to sciences and now I want it to happen to social sciences. Comte wants to transform Social Sciences into Social Physics.

A social transformation must be based on positive philosophy in order to be meaningful and effective. Positive philosophy is the only way through which rational social order can be established. While Bacon had drawn a distinction between progress in science and innovations in civil society, Comte unifies both aspects so that his critique of metaphysical and theological philosophy has also a political character.

However, Comte’s position is not more radical than Bacon’s. On the contrary, just as Bacon thought that innovating popular movements were dangerous, Comte’s aim in reorganizing modern society seeks to remedy its alleged anarchic and disorderly state. In this he is implicitly in line with Hobbe’s main preoccupation
with the stability of the commonwealth. Comte says that:

"the positive philosophy befriends public order by bringing back men's understandings to a normal state through the influence of its method alone.... It dissipates disorder at once by imposing a series of indisputable scientific conditions of the study of political questions".16

Comte makes the meaning of this assertion crystal clear:

"As it is the inevitable lot of the majority of men to live on the more or less precarious fruits of daily labour, the great social problem is to ameliorate the condition of this majority, without destroying its classification, and disturbing the general economy; and this is the function of the positive policy, regarded as resulting the final classification of modern society".17

Hegel the philosopher concerned with the relationship between philosophy and religion, which lasted throughout his life (1770-1831) inspired materialistic criticism. On the one hand, Hegal thinks that the subject of both philosophy and theology is the
same, namely the Absolute, or rather, the relationship between the Finite and the Infinite. On the other hand, he is aware of the negative character which concrete and historical forms of religion acquire. Transformation of Christianity into authoritarianism and dogmatism is for the first time described as responsible for the alienation of man from his true self. Hegel wants philosophy to come to the aid of Christianity by explaining the dialectical evolution of the opposition between the infinite and the finite, thus giving rational proof for its principles.

Ludwig Feuerbach, the most powerful among left wing Hegalians (1804-72) sees the idea of God as a projection of man’s essence, a product of Objectivation of the human being. He says that:-

"Man – this is the mystery of religion – projects his being into objectivity, and then again makes himself an object to this projected image of himself thus converted into a subject..." ¹⁸

This is the origin of man’s alienation from himself, by separating all that is good in him and good of him.

Feuerbach’s critique of religion goes much deeper than the theory of priestly deceit. While the latter
struggles against religious prejudices as if they are externally imposed upon the people, the former finds a much more profound connection between religion and the human essence. Religion is no longer conceived as an arbitrary and independent phenomenon which could explain people's ignorance and unhappiness. Feuerbach inverts the relationship and explains religion as the essence of man. So religion has a real base, not the invention of some wicked priests to deceive people.

But, the materialistic critiques of religious representations had not studied these with a historical perspective. Ideology and reason thus appear as unhistorical phenomena which struggle with one another in the theoretical field. From Feuerbach comes Marx, who makes materialism dialectical by blending Hegelian dialectics and Feuerbachian materialism. From now on, most of the materialistic connection of social transformation becomes the prerogative of the Marxists, and their various formulations, about which we have already mentioned in the beginning.

Identifying two levels in human being and human society, the one vertical and the other horizontal, it can be easily seen that materialism speaks only about one level of man and his society. Materialistic philosophers are always very particular in concentrating their attack on the vertical level of human existence, namely,
religion, spirituality or transcendence. This was only natural to them. In a word, it can be said that all human knowledge is confined to sensation and sense object contact experience. Ultimate questions or transcendental questions do not find any place in a theory that depends only on empirical cognition. Thus it proves natural for them to make religion their first target of attack; spirituality comes only second.

The materialistic approach of social transformation is essentially one-sided. It reduces man into just another material being, closing its eyes formidably to the spirituality of man, or transcendental man. Thus all materialism becomes viciated of this one-sidedness.

Even if we grant that there is nothing at all beyond a material level of cognition, that is, cognitive reality is only material reality, materialistic philosophy still has to answer many questions.

Spiritual aspirations of man, his longing of transcendence has become a reality with man - a reality with man’s social existence and his society.

Any attempt to conceptualise into account is bound to be partial or one-sided. The complete man must include spiritual ness as well, for spirituality has become a reality with man. Religion may be viewed as the
instrument for ideological deception. What the materialists say, is that spirituality is deceitful in itself or it has been employed by agents for this end.

Comte’s logical positivism, has a positive philosophy fetishised with Science and Causal Reasoning. Comte is very ambitious with his programme of “Social Physics”. Even the very present terminology of “Social Science” itself may be viewed as wrong, given the strict concept of science in the light of “causal reasoning” and “predictability”. Comte wanted scientific precision much more as it is in Neutonian physics and sets out to programme “Social Physics”. Peter Winch effectively contradicts Comte and supports the view that the very nature and spirit is different with human societies, where any attempt of causal explanation and hopes for scientific prediction is far flung.

We have to note that the materialists’ conception of society itself is essentially partial, if not wrong; there-by rendering any effort to conceptualise social transformation essentially one-sided.

Let us now go into the spiritualistic conception of society and social change.

Fortunately, India is a spiritual land. Irrespective of varying faith among contemporary Indians, the
essentially burning spirit of spirituality is constantly ablaze. Naturally, any study on or of spirituality always begins here in India.

The first law or smrithi given to human society is of Manu. His “Mānava Dharma Śāstra”, or “Manu Smruthi” is one of the most ancient among Indian texts; which had a number of commentaries from time to time. Incidentally, Manu Smruthi is the first ever sanskrit text which got translated into a European language, Dutch.

Through “the ordinances” Manu gives a perfect structure and order to society, exclusively on the basis of “Dharma” for which Manu Smruthi has come to be called the “Mānava Dharma Śāstra”. This may be regarded as the first ever attempt in human history to contemplate social structuring spiritually.

The text “Manu Smruthi” has its own history. It has many “Bhāshyas” or commentaries from time to time. We really do not know how many such ’bhashyas’ are lost for ever.

The earliest existing commentary that we have is the “Manu Bhāshya” written by Medhathithi, the son of Viraswamin. His period is believed as 1000 AD. It is almost sure that Medhathithi was not the earliest commentator of Manu, as we find him quoting some of
his earlier commentators. The second available commentary in the line is that of Govindarāja, his period being around 12th century. Govindarāja seems to have adopted the text as adopted by Kulluka and differs much from Medhathithi. The time of the Madhava Sayana’s commentary guessed as 14th century. The commencement of the commentary of Kulluka Bhatta is 16th century. It is also called “Manavartha Muktavali”. The commentary of Narayana is the next one but this is lost. We find the next commentator Raghavananda quoting Narayana, in the commentary of Rāghavānanda in his commentary entitled “Manavartha Chandrika”. Besides, there is another one, the commentary of Nandanacharya which belongs to Tanjavore manuscripts.

The very fact that almost every century sees at least one prominent bhāshya or commentary of Manu points out how important this text has been to Indian spirituality. Those westerners who translated Manusmruthi into European languages (1) Dr. J.Muir; “Sanskrit texts” and “metrical Translations from Sanskrit”, (2) Johaentgen, “Ueber das Gesetzbuch des Manu” (1863), (3) Dr.E.W.Hopkins(Leipzig,1881) “The mutual relations of four castes according to the Manava Dharma Sastra”) naturally could not do proper justice to Maharshi Manu, and those unfortunate Indians who were gifted with western categories and methodology blindly followed them. With all these, Manu Maharshi became
seen as the legitimiser of caste system in India who supports untouchability etc

In the introduction to Edmand Hopkins' translation of Manusmruthi, Dr. Arthur Coke Burnell says:

"...Sanskrit law was pursuing a course of spontaneous development; this has been interrupted, and English doctrine has been pitch forked into Sanskrit texts. Is it likely that a satisfactory result will ever follow? The whole subject is now in a chaotic state, and so great is the uncertainty that valuable property is commonly sold for a thousandth part of its value. So far the present policy cannot be viewed with complicity"\(^1\)

This is only one simple aspect of the problem. Some misconceptions at the level of Sanskrit terminology happened to cause immense turbulence in the world. This includes the misunderstanding of Varunashrama, casting aspersions on Manusmruthi, and the second world war. Herr Adolf Hitler was obsessed with the idea of race. He was convinced of the superiority of the "Aryan race" and purity of "Aryan blood". To quote Hitler,
"...one may call it an iron law of nature—which compels the various species to keep within the definite limits of their own life forms when propagating and multiplying their kind. Each animal mates only with its own species. The titmouse cohabits only with the titmouse, the finch with the finch, the stork with the stork, the field mouse with the field mouse, the house mouse with the house mouse, the wolf with the she wolf etc."²⁰

Hitler believed in the superiority and purity of Aryan race and Aryan blood. He believed that Aryans are the purest and most superior race. He also said that all the world civilizations began at the instance of Aryans reaching there. But then, the great creators of human civilization slowly mix with locals and contaminates their pure breed; and as they become mixed fully, there sets in decadence in civilizations and culture. Then again another group of Aryans reach, civilization once again flourish, and again becomes decadent.

Hitler (1889-1945) is adamant on the purity of the Teutonic race. He even goes to the extent of saying:

"The act (racial mixing and subsequent decadence) which brings about such a
development is a sin against the will of the eternal creator. And as a sin, this act will be avenged" 21.

The people who speak Aryan languages are called Aryans as the people who use Dravidian languages are called Dravidians. Both however have nothing to do with racial identities. Treating Aryan and Dravidian as race is entirely a big mistake.

Given this, the entire theory of Hitler collapses in toto. If Aryan is not a race, then Hitler had gone wrong miserably with the concept of Teutonic race. We must also remember that “Jews” are also not a religious identity to Hitler, He insists that the “Jews” are a racial concept; of course the most miserable race according to him.

The concepts of “Aryan” “Varna” (as used in Varnāshrama Dharma) are ‘quality concepts’. They are connotative concepts and not denotative concepts. Let us take the concept “Aryan” for instance. The concept “Arya”, “Arya putra” are amply found in Vedic literature and writings. Arya in Sanskrit simply means “Shreshta” or Perfect one. it is akin to the concept of Brahman. The one who has acquired jñana of “Brahman”, that is, the one who has acquired the qualities of conceptual
Brāhman is a Brahmana. By birth none is a Brahmin: he has to become one through work and purification.

"janmanā Jayate sudra,
karnana Jayate dwija:"

Similarly, the one with some established qualities becomes an Ārya.

Manu’s division of society into four castes is simply a qualitative division of society. Each member of society has his natural abilities and capacities. According to one’s abilities one works or functions in society. A trader or cultivator is such that he has such inclination, and a teacher is so because his inclinations are such. The one who has love of wisdom becomes a philosopher, the one who has happiness in procuring wealth goes for trading, he is a vānik. Manu doesn’t divide society on the basis of caste. He divided the society on the basis of quality of each member of the society. He names the qualities as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra: and he also clearly mentions about their functions.

Manu is very scientific in making social stratification. If a society is structured purely on the basis of abilities and capacities of its members, then such society shall be the noblest and the most perfect. It makes no one a misfit in his profession and every one
can contribute to one's optimum. Thus society gets the best from all its members, and no greatness is thrust upon any one, who suffers and struggles under its weight. It is like forcing a meat eater to live on fruits and milk; it is like forcing a common man to practise celibacy.

We cannot accuse Manu or Manusmruthi for the social decedeness of "Varna" into "Castes". Certainly, an explanation to this ought to come from outside the context of Manu and his ordinances. We can't blame the one who plants and rears the sapling for its' fruits becoming insect affected. Manu can't be held responsible for the social decedence of Varna into caste. Yet another popular misunderstanding about Manu is his misquoted sloka, "Na-Stree....". Here also Manu is misunderstood as it is evident from many other places where he gives maximum protection to "Stree". Manu only means that women should be always protected and never abandoned from man's care and caution.

Thus Manu's society is one of the most scientific and perfect formation of a society, simple and pure, based on spirituality and giving full attention to the transcendental longing of man and it is most unlike Western Materialism.
It was during the formation of Vedic society, the initial stages witnessed priestly domination as experienced in medieval European societies. It was at that time, that the first challenge towards the domination of the priests (Purohits) took place in man’s history. When the priests became dogmatic with the Vedas, the Rishis challenged this dogmatism and priestly domination. This was the birth of the “End of Vedas” theory, the philosophy of Vedanta, or the Upanishads.

The study of Upanishads is the culmination of the intellectual achievement of a great epoch. Since they are Vedantas—the concluding part of Vedas, they also retained their vedic names which they took from the different branches or Sakha among which the Vedas were studied. Thus the Upanishads attached to the Brahmanas of the Aitareya and Kausitaki schools are respectively called Athreya and Kaushaki Upanishads, Those of the tandins and Talavakaras of the Samaveda are called the Chandogya and Talavakara (Kena) Upanishads. Those of the Taittiriya is school of the yajurveda from the Taittiriya and Mahanarayana, of the Katha school the Kathaka, of the Maitrayani school the Maitrayani. The Brahadaranyaka Upanishad forms part of the ‘Satapatha Brahmana’ of the Vajasaneyi schools. The Isa Upanishad also belongs to the latter school. The school to which Svetasvatara belongs cannot be traced, and has probably been lost. The Upanishads are the enlightenment of the
schools to which they belonged. A large number of the later Upanishads are attached to the Atharva Veda, and most of them are not named according to the Vedic schools, but according to the subject matter with which they dealt.

Generally speaking, in common parlance, Vedanta means the Vedanta of Sankara. He had interpreted ten of the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutra Bhashya, and his followers gave more conceptual clarity to the Sankara Vedanta.

On a broad spectrum analysis, Vedanta treats Brahman as the ultimate reality and Atman as one and the same thing. The separation what is felt is due to Māyā or Illusion, and it is all due to Avidya or ignorance. Ignorance here means ignorance of the real nature of the self or "Atman". When the true nature of the self or soul is known, one realizes the truth as "Aham Brahma asmi" which means "I am Brahman" the Ultimate Reality itself. The separation between the soul and that Ultimate Reality is due to ignorance, and due to illusion.

The Vedanta on a final analysis collapses all distinctions between not only man and man, but also from all living as well as non-living things. If everything is really homogenous and the heterogeneity perceived is really out of ignorance of this truth, all
social hierarchy immediately becomes illusory as well and hence meaningless. Naturally a society built upon such spirituality shall not have any room for social disparities.

Buddhism came as a reaction to the orthodoxy of Hinduism, by which Hinduism was becoming decadent. Buddhism used the language of common folks, and tried to end the suffering of mankind through a system of philosophy which Buddha received through his process of getting enlightened. These were the four Noble Truth including the eight-fold path to end man’s sufferings. Buddha was very particular in his teachings to treat all human beings as equal. By that time, the spirit of Vedanta had been lost, and classifications based on caste system was rendering the society as a very bad place to live. The heterodoxy of Buddhism denied the authority of Vedas only to effectively counter domination and exploitation of the common folks through the authority of religion. Denial of the authority of the Vedas made Buddha free from traditional bondage, and his teachings became a separate system of philosophy and religion.

The essence of a social transformation from a spiritual standpoint is a natural change from within. Spirituality calls for practising of detachment; because suffering is a direct outcome from any form of attachment to the phenomenal world. One has to realize
the emptiness of the value he attaches to material possession, as no amount of material possession can bring lasting happiness, leave alone ananda or bliss. It must be understood that people in common look for happiness, peace and tranquility. If this can’t be achieved through the means what they think could provide these (material possession) all struggle and effort to acquire more of earthly possession is as futile as emptiness itself. If such a realization can get into a society, then transformation of such a society is spontaneous and smooth. From an economic point of view, economic disparity cannot exist under such circumstances and from political point of view, there can’t just be any political upheavals, and from religious point of view, it is perfect.

Now, we can come back to the basic question of this chapter. What is the meaning of social transformation? Or, more precisely, what ought to be the meaning of social transformation?

In order to get the term “social transformation” to be meaningful at all, it must be possible for us to visualize a situation where the need of a social transformation is mandatory. This, however could be amply established from various factors. The linguistic philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein treats language as dynamic and rule governed activity. Finding an analogy
between language and game, he calls it "Language game". Further, he concludes that language is a "form of life". Societies are also dynamic, rule-governed and a form of life. Since societies are dynamic, any static conception of society could simply be contradiction in terms. Societies are constantly changing, evolving and becoming.

Society consists of human beings. What really distinguishes man from animal is not just his intellectual capacity or rational ability. With all these, it is quite possible for men could be just raw bruits; what really makes man human is his culture and his civilization based on such culture. Culture implies possession of certain "value system", certain moral and other codes of conduct etc.; which are spontaneous to a given society. If spontaneous social changes are in line with these, then that shall be fine. Righteousness is powerful and it always wins in the long run, but evil, though has to succumb in the long run, is temporarily more powerful than righteousness. Perhaps it is due to this that moral decadence sets in virtuous societies, and human effort is constantly called for maintaining the right course of societies to flow forward. Such human efforts and human beings are agents of social transformation. All eminent social reformers are such agents of culture and value-systems. Society can’t be let alone to spontaneously develop by itself like a horse without any
reins, it must be controlled and guided by such agents of providence and virtue.

No materialistic attempt of transforming society could therefore be fruitful; Economic comfort alone doesn't yield happiness. Legitimate social transformation must have a spiritual bearing, also - it must be culturally bound. It must represent a definite value-system. Economic determinism is certainly not without it's point, it goes a long way in making men happy, all be it the fact that such happiness is temporary and brings only unhappiness if pursued more. None the less, economic comfort must accompany cultural and spiritual overbearing of a social transformation, or else it shall be like the story of the Bengoli poet. The poet laments that he is unable to enjoy the beauty of a full moon; since the full moon resembles so closely a "chapathi" and every time he looks at it, he becomes more hungry which renders him incapable of anything.

A spiritualistic society shall not have a fraudulent prince as its political head who is a master of deceit. In short, the legitimate spiritual basis of a society could be a substructure from which all other political, legal, economic and consciousness should spring forth.
Reference

7. Ibid. p.278
8. Ibid. p.311
10.Ibid. pp 100-1
11.Ibid. pp 100-1


15. Ibid. p. 71.

16. Ibid. p. 213.

17. Ibid. p. 215.


