Chapter IX

IS COMPLETE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF EVIL POSSIBLE?

No dogmatic determination:

The human mind is a developing and evolving thing which acts and reacts according to the currents and counter currents of different times with their attending tensions and fluctuations. It is indisputable that the ultimate reality - God is beyond the ken of human mind. Thus, in the quest of the Supreme good, the issues of the problem of evil as seen in the different religions continuously meet and sharply conflict with one another. Each individual person and society as such must give fight with one's own respective situation in the needed religious perspective.

Man's hunger for spiritual thirst is infinite and unlimited. And such a religious quest without crisis is a contradiction in terms. It is a predicament constantly to be fought and won over.

Struggle against Evil is a continuous process:

The notion of direction entails the notion of goal. Thus, life has no dichotomy, it is an unbroken Flow. The inner and outer search of life are neither at two poles nor are they free from one another's influence. The
Supreme God is not a static truth. But it ever stirs and strives within, behind and beyond. That is, there is no such thing as a uniform, stationary and unchanging supreme good whether in respect of belief or practice.

Truly speaking, the supreme good and happiness do not and cannot fully manifest under human limitations. Ultimately it is an all encompassing goodness which is never exhausted and never reaches an end.

Religious experience as felt generally in this context, is not the pure and unmixed state of the good and real in itself. What is normally presented is already influenced by the ideas and possessions of the perceiving mind. The developing person both controls and is controlled by his ideas and conceptions of the Supreme God. Still, inspite of this determinable conditions and consequent limitations, man is endowed with creative and dynamic nature.

The process of self-manifestation does not get exhausted at one point of time. The 'best' in man never permits him to be satisfied with temporary pursuits. In reality, the very lack of satisfaction is the spur of the further endeavour. And it is in this search for the 'best' and the beyond which makes man at ease with himself and others.
The ethical life is significant and meaningful in this context. For, it continues till there is a total attainment of the spiritual supreme good both in the outer and inner life. Now, this spiritual search for good has as much to do with the 'end' as to the process of realizing its end. Slowly and slowly it is a way of 'offering' and 'dedication' of oneself and its attending petty tendencies while in the quest of the supreme good. Ultimately one has to transcend the stage of moral life too. But this is in no way meant to point towards endless time which is not at all the same as the state of timelessness.

Religious experience is as varied and multi-faceted as men are. It is a matter of deep trust and faith and provides the highest solace for a way out. The claims of such a religious need is not due to authority, but only on the basis of one's own inner and intuitive experience.

Existence of evil is indissolubly connected with creation:

The fact of evil and suffering is inevitably linked with earthly existence and creation. In the world as it is, complete removal of evil is not possible. This is evidenced in the fact that in spite of man's much headway in science, technology and vision of himself, still despite the resultant positive gains of the same, man is not relieved of evil and suffering fully.
Notwithstanding this certainty of evil being recognized in general, the religions also regard the problem of evil as the instrumental in the purpose of realizing the Supreme good. In other words, evil is good misplaced or by mistake it claims a place in the whole, disturbing its coherence.

Anyway, we must admit in this context that the problem of the distribution of evil in the world is itself beyond man's understanding. To grasp the nature of all pervasive supreme reality from our relative position is beset with inherent contradiction and therefore impossible too. Again, it must be admitted that those cases of excessive evil with much pain and miseries are self-defeating, for they harm man negatively, that is, leading to total cynicism and absolute inactivity.

Evil is necessary for good:

When we look at the problem of evil from the total context of meaning of the sublime Supreme Reality, it is changed in its perspective. Thus, the problem of evil is important not for its own sake, but it only indicates that we do not make the quest of good as we ought to. Religion in its dynamic condition means this conscious suffering and this in turn blunts the sharpness of the fact of evil. Once one suffers consciously, then it becomes a power which one wields in the next.
It is in strifes and struggles that one comes to measure one's strength. Going through the instances wherein evil and suffering crush the human spirit also helps to develop the human spirit very often. One who has gone through it is morally more strong and courageous than one with mere theoretical knowledge of evil.

The manifestation of God's purpose and the end of His Kingdom requires co-operation from the mankind. And for this evil is necessary to some extent, for then only man strives further. The higher the idea of the nature of good, the deeper will be the vision of the nature of evil. In fact this helps spiritually to awaken man to the tragedy and predicament of human life and enables man to look up when he feels let down and helpless. Everything possesses its own place in the highly and complexly ordered universe.

The knowledge of the problem helps positively:

Deep awareness of the problem of evil leads one to the quest of good. It assists one to dispell various fears and apprehensions and inspires for the further struggle. Understanding of this nature is the beginning of the freedom from the evil forces. The knowledge makes one consciously to pursue the good. The knowledge of one's limitations is a safety and strength of man.
Evil in no way is to be blamed or brooded over vainly. In reality, as we saw it is a necessary part and parcel of the worldly creation. It is like darkness which cannot be lifted out from one place to another. As light alone can dispell the darkness, so knowledge and wisdom regarding good help to fight out the evil and suffering.

The World is good and helpful:

The world is more than mere ceaseless change. It's subjection to the law and order, systematic regularity and coherence indicates the foundation of spiritual reality. It is a moral universe, where one has to train oneself through various experiences of the world. This only means in other words that the world is a means to further the end which is evidenced by the metaphysics of different religions.

The supreme divine will operates uniformly in the laws of nature. All the religions regard the universe in some sense as good in so far as it is the basis for the realization of the supreme end. This is accepted not by any observation and experimental evaluation, but on the trusted belief of the spiritual goodness of man as well as the transcendent goodness of the Supreme God.
Thus, though the world is full of evil and suffering, it is also a sphere wherein moral values are to be realized. The whole universe activates towards this highest spiritual history of the universe.

It is an unsolved mystery:

The problem of evil is not essentially an abstract problem as a problem in mathematics. It occurs from the particular standpoint of facts and appears in varieties of forms.

Thus, we cannot stamp on any specific solution of the problem of evil as real or unreal true or false, which in an absolute assertion only means, in other words, to be dogmatic about it. Because even when we declare any solution from an indifferent spectator's viewpoint, the problem of evil stands as it is a mystery to sufferers. In the momentary happenings of the world, each situation calls for a specific approach and reaction of the human mind. But then, not all the wills of man fructify. The corollary is that it is the divine will which knows what is in the best interest of the man and the universe.

Here, the mystical approach of self surrender to the divine will ultimately alleviates or ends the personal sufferings of man. But this does not mean escapism or indifference to the facts of evil. Even though its
mysterious aspect is admitted, no efforts are to be spared to approach and solve it effectively in different perspectives and points of views. For religion is the way and direction and not a mere cosy belief in the supreme reality as we have referred to earlier in part one of the thesis. There is the basic order underlying in God's guidance, and the man is endowed with the capacity of self-determination.

This mysterious nature of evil is known to one who is free from delusion and ignorance.

Surrender and Grace:

The attitude of surrender is not trifle and casual, but it is worthy of being cultivated consciously. One must offer one's desires in all their gross and subtle forms to the Supreme God through acts of faith and trust. The conviction gradually ripens and elevates oneself spiritually. Such a deep faith wins over all fears and apprehensions, strains and anxieties.

This is how the grace and forgiveness of Supreme God for the repentants is not arbitrary but in accordance with some fundamental concepts of justice. God ensures cooperation with human actions. The grace is the gift of God and tends to repair the corruption and ignorance of the person. Mere moral life is not enough, man is to be
Thus, though the concept of grace is predominant in the Semitic religions, but it is prevalent to a certain degree in all religions. The ultimate Supreme God is a rational principle, else there would be no ordered life or thought. All the religions are optimistic in that they have implicit faith in God's goodness and the ultimate prevalence of good.

Dualism cannot satisfy for long.

Man is always influenced by the dualistic forces in various spheres of life. But it is when the conviction of one supreme God dawns, the pulls and pushes of this dualism are transcended. All greed and desires, infatuations and temptations fall away. When the problem of evil is essentially the problem of reconciliation and harmony then contemplation and harmony go a long way towards the way out of evil. The religions of the world provide such techniques very well.

It is a gradual transformation and a long drawn out process. Countless conflicts and frictions exist in this aspiration before this basic change is brought about.
Ultimately the genuine self transcends categories:

The very possibility of this explanation of the problem of evil is due to man's creative nature. In fact evil and suffering are the basic stimulation to life and action as such in general. But it is at the level of mind, that is, at a certain evolutionary stage, this creativity is manifest in the cognitive, affective and conative faculties of man. This new vision and harmony is glimpsed in the moments of insight.

Thus, one comes to experience the lifting of the life spirit to the plane of the universal spirit. It is a transcendental state of self-consciousness beyond the spatio-temporal limitations and dualism. In fact at this stage when there is no sufferer, suffering does not remain as such. It is a realm of free actions.

The spiritual progress is indeed illimitable. It is the wisdom of the inner understanding. The point is that in the quest of good and supreme being, one has to become the instrument of the total reality. It is an attempt at discovering the divine truth within man. Satisfaction lies in the full efforts towards this goal.

The crux of the whole problem of evil consists not in doing away with evil and suffering as such, which is only negative and incidental, but in the attaining of perfection
of the authentic condition of man, which is positive and fundamental. From the discriminating religious perspective, the problem of evil points beyond itself to the realm of light, glory and fulfilment.