Section : I

INTRODUCTION
Chapter : 1

THE NEED AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Sri Narayana Guru was one of the foremost social Philosophers of this country. He has not only written about social philosophy but also practiced social philosophy in its true spirit. He has worked for the last man like John Raskin through his various programmes. He built schools-temples as centre for socio-spiritual education and set up many revolutionary activities like protest for un-touchability, inequality, mock-marriage, hereditary profession like toddy tapping, and the like till his last breath.

Social philosophy is defined as "Philosophic critique of social process with reference to the principles underlying social structure and functions". Social philosophy is a branch of philosophy which mainly
deals with social problems, especially, issues concerning social values. A sound social philosophy is the need of the hour to tackle problems which are disturbing the minds of the humankind such as inequality, injustice, oppression and so on. Social philosophy is the challenge of our era marked by rapid changes in the social setup, technological progress and political upheavals. As society is in constant change, innovative ideas and living categories, new perspectives are to be accepted to build up a holistic world vision in order to cope up with the demands and new values of the society in the global scenario. Hence social philosophy has to accommodate itself new ideas, values, trends, thinking and living patterns.  

"The foremost aim of social philosophy is the realization of common good and common welfare through the ideas of 'Vasudaivakutumba'. It tries to
bring rehabilitation of humankind towards social
reconstruction for the establishment of one world family
barring all kinds of differences (caste, creed, etc) created
by narrow minded human beings".  

Social philosophy diagnoses the evils of fanaticism
and fundamentalism and advocates that such are the root
causes for terrorism and war. Terrorism and war can be
set aside by man only through an universal vision of one
world, one religion, one God and one Government. As
social philosophy is normative in its approach it seeks to
evaluate things. It does not merely describe but
prescribes ideals or set of ideals. It studies societal
patterns and throughout with its commitment for the
ideal, welfare, peaceful, equal and just society which is
bereft of all kinds of exploitation, discrimination and
destruction. Hence, social philosophy tries to mountup
pressure on nuclear nations to deactivise the existing
nuclear stock-piles not to manufacture nuclear weapons in future to save life on this planet. Hence social philosophy is most needed to save humankind in the present juncture.

Social philosophy has also scientific value since it investigates the social nature of man in his universalistic dimensions, not confining only to the social-structural dimensions. It sees society as a unit of order and relationships among human persons. As society consists of human individuals bound together by the same patterns of behaviour knit together by a common structure, moral and legal understanding, end and goals, natural and supernatural. Social philosophy upholds that human development as a person is possible only in unison with other fellow humans. Social and communitarian aspects of humankind are inseparable and empirically observable. Different aspects such as
biological (Marriage and family), psychological (membership of social group) and teleological (self-realization) are to be taken into account in understanding the philosophical dimensions of society.

Sometimes the problems of society are so grave that common people do not understand them in right perspective. The social values, ethics and morality may sometimes create conflicts among people and then in society which leads divisions and fight among different divisions or groups. The inequalities, which are created on the basis of caste, occupation, religion, and race, may create not only confusions but may lead chaos in the society. To set right such atmosphere, society requires an ideology or philosophy, which would asherein social harmony and peace. Therefore, social philosophy, in this backdrop, analyses the nature of human persons, community's institutions, their interactions and inter-
relationships in society. Hobhouse aptly puts: "We set before ourselves a conception of the harmonious fulfillment of human capacity as the substance of happy life and we have to enquiry into the conditions of its relations. We consider laws, customs and institutions in respect of their functions not merely in maintaining any sort of social life, but in maintaining and promoting a harmonious life".  

Social philosophy tries to give new orientation and build a kind of rapport among individuals and institutions. It is value-oriented in its assessment of social ideals and institutions. Hence, the aim of social philosophy is the attainment of 'social good, harmony and peace in the man's society. In otherwords, social philosophy seeks to interpret the significance of social life and institutions with reference to the social units of mankind. "It thus means mainly to study values, ends,
ideals, not primarily what exists or has existed or may be expected to exist, but rather the meaning and worth of these model of existence. A social philosophy undertakes such a study to enquiry into the best possible social arrangement where in the highest social ideal of a 'happy man in a happy society' could be realized. A happy man means one who endows with freedom, self-motivations and perfect equality and who can take up programmes and policies and which aims at social justice, social equality, fraternity, and towards establishment of harmony and peace in the human society. A happy society means that which provides autonomous freedom, freedom to opt for values to an individual in a cohesive system and treating individuals as end in themselves. This way, both individuals and society should co-operative with each other without cutting their
freedom and basic value at the same time sacrificing their-ego to promote harmony and peace in the society.

Sri Narayana Guru has practiced and preached such a holistic kind of social philosophy to establish harmony and peace through several principles like 'one caste one religion and one God', one in kind, one in faith and one in God and universal prayer, freedom through education. We will be seeing such a global social philosophy in our subsequent chapters.
Foot Notes:


3. Ibid, P.183.
