Chapter – I

MAN AS A SOCIAL BEING

A man is a product of many factors in which social factor occupies a very important place. Indeed the life and nature of every individual besides bearing biological and environmental factors is the product of a social relationship, determined by various pre-established mores of the society.¹ This is one aspect which distinguishes man from other biological species, but with the only aspect the other aspect is ‘rationality’ which accentuates these interactions so as to serve his inherent quest.

What this quest is that makes the sociological theories inadequate, how far this can be called ‘inherent’. We shall discuss by stages. Presently we may turn to the social aspect of man’s existence through social and environmental interactions as envisaged by social studies.

Society is more than an environment, more than the soil in which one is nurtured. His relation to the social progress is more intimate than that of the seed to the earth in which he grows.² Man as a social being is born in a society the process of which determines his being. But parts of his identity are such that they are constituted by internal factors, such as mental equipments which continuously work towards changing our social interaction so as to bring about the best out of the presented situation, thus evoking and directing man’s personality. Society both liberates and limits human potentialities as individuals, not only by providing definite opportunities and
stimulations, it acts by placing upon an individual definite restraints and interferences, and also subtly and imperceptibly, moulding his attitudes, his beliefs, his morals and ideals.

The history of civilization shows that those who question and do not respond to a situation mechanically i.e. blindly are the ones who have taken the society towards development and progress. Superstition or wrong response is borne by non-application of thought. If this blind response would have been the characteristic of human nature then human beings would not have developed science and technology and human beings would have been still in the darkness of ignorance.

It is true that the first duty of man is to protect oneself and his identity. But this inherent urge of self-preservation elevates the status of man from that of the mechanically oriented animals. The theory of class struggle states that a conflict between man and man, as in the animal world is a reality. But it is also true that the rationality of cooperation between man and man is more affective instrument for growth than conflict.

Hence, from history it can be said that human nature is not confined just to selfish principles of animal world for survival, but to the pursuing higher state of social co-operation.

Thus, since man is an animal, he has an earthly identity. The development of a child till its birth is an earthly process. But man creates a superior place in the world for himself different from the lowly animals. In the entire growth process there no scope for any extra-earthly or Supernatural spark to enter in to the process nor is
there any accidental affair. On the contrary, the whole process occurs to him as a natural phenomenon of constant change for the better.

Anthropological studies have shown that, so far as the growth process is concerned, the society for man was not an end, but a means. It was not evolved to control man. Primitive man had to constantly fight against his surroundings to survive. In the process he looked for co-operation of others, and it become easier to continue the struggle. The desire to continue with the struggle for life and the insight of self preservation impelled man to build the society.

Instinct is a primitive form of reasoning. Life Science has supported this view too. This view has a psychological base. William McDougall mentioned, “It was assumed that human nature (our inherited inborn constitution) comprises instincts.” Instinct is not totally devoid of reasoning. It has been noticed even in animal behaviour that instinct, sometimes remains so identical with emotion, that is a clear outcome of reasoning. It was also mentioned by McDougall that parental instinct may be considered as the mother of both intellect and morality. It may be treated as an altruistic element in nature and without this altruistic factor, moral character can not be shaped. So it may be maintained that moral sense and ability of moral thinking are largely depend upon the ability of reasoning and thus it may also be maintained that instinct has a base of reasoning. From psychological point of view, instinct may have variety according to different modes and needs of life. And for this, it is always, to some extent, supported by reason.
Rationality and the capacity to relate past memories can be found in the lower creatures also. In fact rationality is a quality of living organisms. But incidentally it is high in human beings. Due to this rational nature man has been able to curb the crude and selfish animal motives into something more refined and polished. This refinement has been incorporated by the society as a social value for man to pursue.

It may be further stated that instinct has gradually developed itself to form rationality in man. That is to say, rationality is not an unearthly affair. The presence of rationality is noticed in not only lower creatures but plants and one celled organisms also through a very subtle way. A unicellular organism always tries to reach that environment which is favourable for its growth. It rejects the environment that it feels is unsuitable. Plants move towards light because light helps in its survival and growth and a weak or soft stemmed plant will always take the support of a tree.

This is how the process of growth also works in man when he enters into the social bond. He, like the weak plan, survives through all unfriendly situations including clashes of personal interest with the help of this bond of co-operation. But unlike the plan, or for that matter, unlike any other creatures, he goes beyond mere this limited goal of survival under certain condition. He goes on to take advantage of the state of social co-operation to overcoming all incompleteness towards realizing his fuller role as a human being. What is this ‘fuller role’ we shall see later.
But comprehension of this fundamental and dynamic interdependence of individual and social heritage permits us to appreciate the truth of Aristotle’s famous phrase that “man is a social animal.” By saying so we do not mean that man has a strictly pre-determined role in the society as other animals have in the biological world. Animals are creatures of instinctive action-reaction form accentuated by Nature. Their activities and behaviour are led to some ends only under these natural lows. They are not ‘conscious’ of their ends. On the contrary their instinctive actions are regulated by ‘experience’ in a bio-mechanical way. That is, because of the traces left in their biological system by past actions. The process, however, begins as instinctive behaviour. The young creature imitates the actions of the adult one. That gives it the initial-help for survival. But as it grows, it is more and more led to group living by the same instinct of survival for example, the gregarious animals, which live in groups, imitate the actions of their leaders to remain safe from many possible hazards. In this way certain habitual forms of activity grow up but they are devoid of reason and moral consciousness.

But man presents a totally different state which is far more complex than that of animals. He requires the power of reflection, a unique human quality, slowly in the course of intercourse with the society unlike the herd behaviour of the animals. Reason is the basis of all social interactions. It regulates the latter though at the beginning its presence is very subtle and hardly noticeable. Apparently rather it is more akin to that of the animals.

Socio-psychological researches reveal that man begins as the imitator of the modes of others behaviour in the family and then in the
society. He unconsciously imitates the customs and manners, the language and religion of the social group or community. He accepts the group code of morality without criticism, accepts customs as the standard of morality. Then gradually he develops the higher state of morality based on rational exercise in the form of accepting and regulating the said codes to suit his real good from the broader standpoint. According to W. Lillie; there are four types of mental process. 7

Thus, it may be said that man’s life process is not mechanically pre-determined. Man is free to follow his course of life. The theory of ‘Determinism’ says that, every thing that happens is determined as being caused by some preconditions. 8 But man’s life cannot be said to be predetermined in the sense in which determinism envisages it. On the contrary, man’s being caused by factors like mental, physiological, Social and rational, show that neither mere instinctive behaviour, nor the herd-behaviour pattern of animals controls and determines his life. Social field of duty, responsibility, obligation etc. does work on him, but only in the way in which he applies it to his continuous transcending process, a process that takes him from the existing state to its improved one above the immediate selfish ends, to use Hobbes language, from the “nasty, brutish and short” state of selfish in fights to combining into communities. 9

Here a question may arise, if every event is determined (caused), how is human freedom possible? If every event is caused, all human decisions are also caused. And if they are caused how can he be free to think and act? In fact, every person’s freedom of thought and action is limited. Some people may appear to have more of it than others. But
on a close examination it would appear, they do not have freedom of that sort for which even they could be called ‘totally free’. The conditions that are responsible for the occurrence of man’s desires, choices etc. are not wholly within ‘his’ control, and are linked to a chain of sufficient conditions of circumstances that are oriented by several other outside factors. Thus ‘freedom’ of indeterminism to the extent that it makes man free to do anything is incompatible with human actions.

Let us refer to the following diagrammatic illustration where we will see how ‘Three factors’ namely, the biological, intellectual and social factors of man’s life work together to shape his being.

1. Biological process like growth of the body through eating, breathing, self defense, procreation, etc.

2. Intellectual process securing the more and more helpful conditions for 1.

3. Social process of mutual interaction in family, community, region, nation etc. necessitated by 1 and 2 for better working.
Human nature gets its total development in the society. To be a complete being, man has to get satisfied different factors responsible for the process of completion. Biological factors mainly involves in bodily developments. This is a process of nurturing the needs for survival. Though it leads to physical development still it is compulsory for one’s survival. At the very beginning, human beings remain dependent for their upbringing. In a natural process, which refers to a family system, they get the idea of duty and responsibility in this stage. So it may be maintained that, the biological factors, in a sense, are same of the basic factors responsible for shaping a human being.

An observation suggests that, there are interdependent principal factors become effective for framing an individual’s identity. These are (i) natural environment, (ii) social heritage. (iii) heredity and (iv) the group. Though these all are very closely inter-related, heredity factor may be treated as the biological factor, as it determines the type of the biological needs and the level of satisfaction of these needs.

In the long process of the satisfaction of biological needs, human beings start to be conscious about their intellectual being. The intellectual essence of human nature is such a natural phenomena that one need not be very conscious about its development. That is to say, intellect is a basic instinct of human nature. For this it has a great role in developing the complete shape of human existence. Intellectual process becomes especially helpful for framing the human capacity in the way of biological need satisfaction. Social process is a
synthesis of the individual with the society. Here also the heredity factor plays its role because capacity of coping with others demands a certain intellectual level, which is necessarily connected with heredity factor.

The social process is a larger one, which starts from one’s family and it is an endless process. Natural environment, social heritage, group feeling—all these factors play their role in human communication and reaction to its family, community, religion, society and nation. For example it may be quoted that, “Groups of different size and pattern may have different effects on personality. All others things being equal, a boy brought up in a small family will be different from a boy reared in a large family, and both will be unlike a boy who grows up in an orphanage. Moreover, all these boys will behave differently in their homes from the way they behave in the schoolroom, and in neither place will they act as they do at a football game. A knowledge of the various kinds of groups and group processes is thus essential to full understanding of human experience.”

It is important to note here that, all these factors, which play important roles in the three development processes namely-- biological process, intellectual process and social process, are not universal for all situations.

They have a varying significance in the process of building human progress towards completion i.e. the real feeling of fulfillment.
But the identification of the factors contributing to the growth of a man cannot be complete unless we identify the fourth one, namely, the process of superseding the limitedness of the self, that is, the rational being in him, necessitated by the above ‘three’, becomes active in order to make the ‘best’ of his existence. The role of this fourth factor we shall discuss in the following chapters. But presently let us see why the first three factors are very important but not sufficient in themselves to work out the ‘man’ that an individual is.

We have said that, when we say, a man is a social animal we do not contend that individuals belong to society as the cells ‘belong’ to an organism. The latter is a mechanical belonging working in a pre-designed action-reaction programme. But this ‘belonging’ is not so a human being. The centre of all activities, of feeling, of emotion and of purpose is the basic characteristic of the individual even when he is bearing a social identity.

Here human beings are unlike bees or ants who are particularly known for their herd behaviour. There is purely natural, as Hobbes observed with individual fighting for selfish ends almost nil. The bigger and more developed the species, the more is the ‘individual’. But such individuality, by virtue of its inner biological urge for ensuring survival, goes for two thing: (1) fighter out the possible threat to its interest,(2) enters into co-operation and herd-life for certain specific goals. Such as secured sex, safer food, protection of off-springs etc. but these ‘commonwealth’ activities are the same way natural. And
this is only further extended to securing ‘much more’ (including realizing the best possible form of life free from all possible inadequacies) for each individual when they enter this social-bond. Let us remember that this ‘entering’ is not artificial as Hobbes thought, but equally natural like that of other species with the only difference that such ‘entering’ involves thought, reasoning etc. that is a kind of mental and intellectual exercises which other species lack.

Society is the place which influences man in a great way on the basis of experience. ‘Experience’ means ‘experience of the individual’-through his struggle, his endeavours, his interests and aspirations, his hopes and wishes; in short, all that we can assign to his life as a being is society. And conversely, it is only because he is a part of the society that an individual is capable of exercising the above to his benefit. Without being in a social bond of natural help with fellow individuals (a commonwealth), this would either prove a terrible state of the one man world of Robinson Crusoe or would lead to war and destruction. The relation ship between individual and society is not one-sided. One helps and is helped by the other to flourish.

Thus we may say on the one hand that man as a social being does not give up ‘individuality’ because his conduct is not simple imitative or the result of mere blind reflexes. He is guided by customs, mores and habits, but not entirely the slave of them. His responses to the social environment are not automatic or blind mechanical reflexes. Understanding and personal purpose are important guiding factors of
his activities. Individuality in the sociological sense is that attribute which reveals the member of a group as more than merely a member. For he is a self, a center of purposeful activity and rational exercises regulating his social existence. This conception stands behind the admonition we often give to others or to ourselves – ‘be your self’. Being oneself does not mean absolute originality: it certainly does not mean eccentricity. A strong individuality may, in fact, express more fully the spirit or the character of his actions, but it so does only because it rationally organizes man’s being in the perspective of social needs.

It is true that when members of group are more individualized they will reveal greater differences and they will express themselves in a greater variety of ways. But the criterion of individuality is not how far each is divergent from the rest. It is rather how far each individual, in his relations to others, act in accordance with his own consciousness, and with his own interpretation, on the face of claims of others upon him. When the possessor of individuality behaves as others do, at least in matters he deems important, he does it not simply because others do it, but because his own self approves that particular behaviour. When he follows authority except when he is compelled to, he follows it partly because of his conviction and not because it is forced by authority. He does not blindly accept or echo the opinions of others. He has total independence of judgement, has
his own initiative and his power of discrimination to act as a social
being.

We do not claim that the possessor of individuality exercises a
greater freedom of will than his fellow members of the society. On the
contrary we uphold that the individual is able to exercise freedom of
choice on the one hand and work under compulsion of deterministic
social factors on the other. Our view of individuality is that,
personality is the blend of a social being working to his own purposes
as well as to the purposes of others, again to foster his own benefit. In
fact, ‘Individual man’ does neither insolate him to the blind world of
his own, nor liquidated him in deterministic kind of behaviour. Our
view is that, an individual is a product of ‘four factor’- a combination
of both deterministic and freedom factors which ‘by nature he is
placed with’.

Here, let us elaborate the significance of the phrase ‘by nature
he is placed with’.

In connection with this we may refer to the biological
development of man by\textsuperscript{12} referring to the theory or Evolution.
Linnaeus (1707-78), Buffon (1707-88), Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802),
Lamark (1744-1829), charles Darwin (1809-1882) and Herbert
spencer are some of the pioneers of the theory. The most popularly
accepted theory of Evolution is that of Charles Darwin, which is better
known as the theory of the ‘Survival of the Fittest’. It says that life is a
gradual process of nature’s evolution where man is just a species struggling to survive as all other species do. The only difference is that the former has better natural staff for the purpose than the latter. In his ‘The origin of species’.\textsuperscript{13} Darwin gave a detailed and richly documented theory of the actual mode and process of evolution by means of natural selection or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life.

And Herbert Spencer, in his ‘Principles of Biology’ (1872) defines life in these simple words, “Life is the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations.\textsuperscript{14}

But these theories are not sufficient to meet some questions related to different aspects of biological evolution in nature. For instance, it cannot explain the phenomenon of choice which a man very much possesses. A man chooses to eat when hungry, but chooses not to do. So if he thinks that fasting would be more appropriate for a purpose, for instance a religious goal. Obviously his biological nature cannot permit that he acts against the law of survival principles of eating and drinking. That means mechanical growth process cannot explain the growth of a cell into a complete man that he is. And Herbert Spencer himself admitted that, “We are obliged to confess that life in its essence cannot be conceived in physico-chemical forms”\textsuperscript{15}

And in fact it is this role of choice and decision that, unlike the evolution process of other animals, forced men to enter into the
different mores of social living in order to realize a better form of life itself. And one simple fact that differentiates the nature of evolution process of other animals from that of man is that while for the former to survive there have been changes in their bio-physical characteristics through millions of years to go with the changing requirements of the survival process, man even went on to control nature itself where necessary to meet his growing requirements.

A branch of modern science, called Genetics, is worth-mentionable in this respect. This branch is tirelessly engaged in research and invention work unveiling the mystery of life and its evolution and development. But this science studying the nature of genes rather supports our contention that human behaviour is not confined to animal elements acquired from its biological sources. These genes, besides accounting for man’s biological growth and development, also account for the most striking feature of this class of bipeds, namely, personality and the identity of self with the unique form of thinking-feeling-willing.

In fact the process of ‘protein synthesis’ is, as Dr. S. Ghosh observes, one of the best example of this intelligent factor right from the earliest stage of life.

Indeed, side by side with this biological development, man also goes through a continuous process of intellectual development. To sustain the biological development to further accomplishments and to
secure that position in the process of growth man needs intellectual cover too.

So let us say that the above mentioned complex state of functioning in the process of evolution jointly lead man to grow physically & intellectually through the assistance of his social surrounding to more and more improved state.

We are now to see firstly, that these states of an individual through the process of evolution is for the better, and secondly that man cannot but go ahead for such betterment.

In this respect the first important point that we have already referred to is that, man like any other creature has to survive, for which he has to primarily protect his existence. We have seen that this begins with the biological process. But unlike other creatures-his intellect comes into action to protect his biological existence.

Again, unlike other creatures, this application of the faculty of intelligence creates in him the need to go for creating such conditions around him that ensure his protected existence through all possible future uncertainties.

Let us consider a short sketch of this historical development in this respect. The savage man was no different from other creature. His biological need for food led him to collect it from nature that included plants, seeds, fruits etc. But the threat of gradual extinction of these natural edibles in course of time (Which only his intelligence could
determine) he went on to secure the same from hunting wild animals and fishing. But again his intelligent assessment of the said food resource prompted in him the will to create a food situation which he could himself control without depending on the mercy of nature’s supply. Thus came up the much improved state of agriculture that ensured food for him free from any threat of extinction.

But there too came up a new threat. The threat of clashes among the individuals for the sake of securing one’s uninterrupted possession is the fruits of his labour. So he wanted to secure it through mutual cooperation and the society came into being.

This is how, to say in Short, his endeavour for betterment did never cease. We may, rather say, it goes on gaining by both quality and quantity as man wants to achieve the best of everything on the Earth through the said social security. But while saying this, the more important fact that comes to the fore is that, it is the same development process of the self for enrichment that drives him from within the limited scope of individual identity to go beyond the supposedly fulfilled state of his social identity.

What is this ‘going beyond’; we shall see in the next chapter.
References

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