

## MODERN CRISIS AND “COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHT”

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Aristotle maintains that man is social by nature; and hence, according to him, community is a natural growth in a society. The good of an individual consists in leading good life in community. Each community has its own function. But these functions must be compatible to each other. The ultimate end of an individual is identical with that of a community. The good life of an individual is essentially public in nature.

In another words, community may be defined as a social organization which has a common ideal. It refers to a group of individuals who share common joys, sorrows, aspirations and the like and who have also a sense of group solidarity. It is a spontaneous association of individuals who have close contact amongst themselves on account of psychic affinities. There is mutual co-operation between the members of a community on account of common purpose. The member of a community usually resides within the same territory. The members of a community have certain common characteristics such as common language, customs, and traditions and so on. Community however is not a self-contained group there may be a community within a community. A community is an integrated group of individuals who have an intense sense of common life. “A group is called a community if the members of the former share in the basic conditions of a common life”.<sup>1</sup>

Time passed, now we must revisit our conception of the individual and the relationship between individual and community. Due to the huge technological progress, the new terms have been coined to express the world community as a whole which may be named as “Global Village.” Today a community is measured by its technological progress because only technological progress has made the whole world into a “Global Village.” In this regard, we should remember the writing of Dr. Mani Bhaumik in his book *Brahmha Satya Jagat Satya Upanisad Bignan Rabindranath [Treatise]* that we have become the individual members of one and only one technological community for the enormous progress of science. “সমকালীন প্রগতির বৈশিষ্ট্য এই ভাবনার মধ্যে, আমরা সবাই এক আন্তর্জাতিক টেকনোলজিকাল সমাজের সতীর্থা। আমরা বিশ্বায়ন ও সভ্যতার এই উজ্জ্বল পর্যায়ে পৌঁছেছি বিজ্ঞানের সৌজন্যে।”<sup>2</sup>

In this book he has also repeatedly attacked Sankara theory of Brahman that “*Brahmah Satya Jagat Mithya.*” He has remarked:

- (i) Being an extraordinary scholar in Indian philosophy Sankara has failed to realize the many in one and the ultimate one Brahman.
- (ii) He was the authority in Veda and Upanisad. But his philosophy regarding with the reality that “*Brahmah Satya Jagat Mithya*” made the Indian community slothful.

<sup>1</sup> R.M. Maciever & Page, CH. Society, London, Macmillans co.1959, P-9.

<sup>2</sup> Bhaumik. Dr. Mani, *Brahmha Satya Gagat Satya Upanisad Bignan Rabindranath [Treatise]*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, Page (i)

“তিনি অবশ্য ছিলেন মহাপণ্ডিত। বেদ ও উপনিষদে প্রাজ্ঞ। কিন্তু তিনি প্রচার করলেন সারা ভারত জুড়ে একটি বাণী- ব্রহ্ম সত্য জগৎ মিথ্যা-  
যা সম্ভবত ভারতের সভ্যতার ইতিহাসকেই পিছিয়ে দিল হাজার বছর, আমাদের কর্মসংস্কৃতিকেই শিথিল করে দিল। জগৎকে মায়া ও মিথ্যা  
জ্ঞান করে আমরা কমবিমুখ হয়ে উঠলাম।”<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Mani Bhaumik’s analysis is totally wrong because history of Indian Philosophy taught us that Advaita Vedanta of Sankara is not the ultimate end of Indian Philosophy and not even in Vedanta system. The followers of Vedanta system are as follows:

- (i) The Monism of Sankara (*advaita*)
- (ii) The Qualified Monism of Ramanuja (*viśiṣṭadvaita*)
- (iii) Dualism of Nimbarka (*dvaita*) etc.

It should also be mentionable here that according to Sankara, there is no confusion to understand the ultimate reality as “*Brahmah Satya Jagat Mithya*” because “*tattvamasi mahāvākya*” helps us to realize this.

Before analyzing the global community as a whole one point should be mentioned here that in a community the most important thing is the identity of an individual. If the idea of a community is enlarged then a community itself becomes an individual. The set theoretical notion may help to clear this point. Suppose A is a set consisting of the member 1. Here the number 1 is an individual which belongs to set A i.e. Set A = {1}. But the Set A may also a member of another set. Suppose set B = {{1}}. Similarly, it may be {{{1}}} or {{{{1}}}} etc.

Another important point is this in a community each and every primary interests of an individual, is somehow must be assured otherwise it cannot be regarded as a community at all. For example:

- (i) In a festival like Durga Puja or Diwali or Id-UI-Fetar a poor person may give low priced dresses to his family, but enjoy the maximum amount of happiness and it is guaranteed by the community.
- (ii) A poor person also buys low priced particle chicken instead of mutton but he is free to enjoy the maximum amount of test and it is also guaranteed by the community.
- (iii) Similarly, when communities itself become an individual the community as a whole that is the country must assure their primitive interests. For example: Santal, Koal, Vil, Munda, Jaroas etc. in India can live freely in this country.

Identity is one of the determinants of social cohesion. Individuals usually tend to identify themselves with the social groups of which they are members. An individual may side with a social group of which he is a member for a right or wrong cause, there is great deal of truth in the old saying that, “birds of some feather flock together”. Identity is one of the sources of communal feeling. Member of communal group have typical attitudes. It is on account of certain typical attitudes that individual’s identity themselves with others of certain communal group.

But due to huge technological progress when the world itself has become a global village the appeal “I am not a scientist nor is an expert on Climate Change but I am a citizen of the world, a long serving political leader of my nation whom, among many other leaders in their

<sup>3</sup> Ibid-P-7

own respective rights, was bestowed the holy responsibility to fight the cause of climate change to bring justice to the planet earth that is constantly being damaged as a result of human greed.” of Bikenibeu Paeniu, Prime Minister, Tuvalu, a South Pacific nation in his presentation on EPLD, Brisbane, 29 June 2006, seriously compels us to rethink the idea of “**Community, Identity, and Individual Right**”.

It is no doubt that the enormous technological growth gives us all kinds of happiness for some limited community but it is also the cause of some environmental degradation one of which is ‘green house effect’. This ‘greenhouse effect’ is not only going to destruct the primitive interests of some community but also it may be the cause of the destruction of our beloved green planet or the community as a whole within 50 years (if we are not giving major attention to this problem).

It should also be mentioned here that to face the problem, five Major Earth Summit Conventions 1972: Stockholm, 1987: Montreal, 1992: Rio de Janeiro, 1997: Kyoto, 2002: Johannesburg and 2009: Copenhagen has been organized but the crisis remains the same.

But the main point is why does human being has failed to pay attention like such serious problem? It is serious because the whole human species along with the other species may be vanished within 50 years and the human being solely responsible for this.

With reference to the above paragraph, it should be remembered here that Sankara has mentioned “**Brahmah Satya Jagat Mithya**” to get ultimate destination of life i.e. *moksa*. But following the wrong conception of human development we are going to realize that ultimate end of human civilization is in deceased. But the point is how to overcome this situation? What would be the way by which the primary interests of an individual would be assured? We should rethink about this.

The main fact is that we have totally forgotten about the final destination of our life. For this reason, we the so-called learned men do not want to awake from the dogmatic slumber because it has been unfortunately held that there is a direct relationship between what is called development and what is called **Green House Effect**. The term ‘development’ is very much important. It may mean merely the availability of all kind of facilities for the sake of human comfort.

But the actual meaning of the term ‘development’ lies into development of our character to be **a man** where a man can enjoy the peace. Getting **peace** is not identical with the fulfillment of maximum enjoyment. It may look absurd, that in the age of 2014, the question: how to be **a man?** has not been lost its significant. Let us allow to begin with a famous utterance of our śāstrakāras where it has been mentioned that our *dharma* is the main key of becoming **a man**.

*Āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maiythunanca sāmānyametat paśubhirnarānām |*

*Dharma hi teṣām adhiko viśeṣo dharmrṇo hināḥ paśubhiḥ samānah ||*

The intention of the speaker in the above verse is to emphasize the truth that a man cannot be distinguished from animals in respect to any of these four properties of *āhāra* (taking food), *nidrā* (having a sound sleep) *bhaya* (being afraid of something or someone) *maiythuna* (sexual gratification for the preservation of race); for these are common to both animals and men. What differentiates a man from animals is really the possession of *dharma* --- the special (*viśeṣa*) and additional (*adhika*) feature in man --- without which a man is but equal to an animal.

Someone may say that reason makes the difference between an animal and a man. But if this is true, then there would be no sign of:

- i) terrorist activities in the world
- ii) buttering one's own bread at the cost of millions
- iii) taking bribe
- iv) doing harm to anybody
- v) acting as unaware of environmental crisis for present pleasure

More often than not we look upon an inhuman treatment as *pāśvik atyācār*, oppression comparable with beasts. But it is believed that if animals could protest, they would surely have joined issue with us. The animals take resort to violent means only out of fear, anger or hunger. But we people commit sin even in a cold-blooded manner.

Now the important point is what is *dharma*? As the etymology suggests (*dhṛ + man*), *dharma* is that property in the presence of which man becomes a man and in the absence of which man is not a man i.e. cannot be called a man. When, for example, a man quarrels with another and uses abusive language, we say that he is behaving like a dog. A man may be educated, but if he fails to behave sympathetically with his fellow beings and deprives them their duties, we say that he is *amanuṣ* i.e. not possessing the qualities of man. A man is thus not born, but made. It is not truly his physical appearance that characterizes him properly what he is. It is rather his achievement, his attainment that makes him a man proper. That is why Swami Vivekananda exclaims: "Man-making is my mission." For 'man-making' Swamiji emphasizes the role of 'character-building'. When you build up your character, you not only become a man yourself but also become able to make another man. That is why Swamiji's clarion calls: 'Be and make'. Sri Ramkrishna, the spiritual designer and moulder of Swamiji Vivekananda, used to say: *mon mukh ek karai dharma*. That is to say, to do one think another is not a *dharma*. *Dharma* on the contrary, consists in a harmony or unity between what one says and what one does. To the insightful vision of Sri Ramkrishna: A man is one who is conscious of his own standard, his own ideal--- *mān samparke hunsh mānuṣ*.

Let us now turn to the teaching of *śāstras* which a man sets before himself in order to become a man proper- his *dharmas*. To the vision of our truth-seers the following five properties at least need to be cultivated in order that one attains *dharma*. These are:

*Ahimsā satyaṁ asteyaṁ śaucaṁ samyameva ca|*

*Etat sāmāsikaṁ proktaṁ dharmasya lakṣaṇam||*

**Ahimsā** means absence of doing harm to anybody always and everywhere. *Mā hiṁsāt sarva bhūtāni*. It is not merely enough that we desist from hurting anybody physically. It is also necessary that we do not even think of doing any harm to anybody mentally as well. Not to commit violence at any time or anybody either physically or mentally is the negative aspect of *ahimsā*. Positively, *ahimsā* stands for love, kindness, fellow-feeling and the like. To respect another human being, to have reverence for all is *ahimsā*.

**Satya** stand for agreement or parity between words and deeds. Even if the words correspond to reality and meaning but the intention speaker is otherwise, it is to be taken as *mithyā* or false wood. Thus the expression '*Asvatthāmā hata iti gajah*', though true factually, cannot be taken to be true, as the intention of the speaker being otherwise. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that to be uniform in mind and speech is *dharma* and this *dharma* is *satya*. Mahatma Gandhi

also used to say: Truth is God, God is Truth. The seers and sages also salute truth by saying, 'Satyam param dhimahi'. In the *Mundaka śruti* also we find, 'Satyamave jayate nānṛtam'. In the Upanisads it is exclaimed: *Satyam jñānam anantam Brahman*. All these points to the fact that taking resort to *satya* is essential. That is why the first lesson, imparted to a disciple by a teacher in *Acāryapadeśa*, is *satyam vada*- speak the truth.

Next come *asteya* or non-stealing. In Yoga philosophy it is stated that attachment to articles belonging to others, in mind, speech and deed is the essence of *asteya*. In his commentary *Praśtapāda* also points out that *asteya* does not merely mean refraining outwardly from stealing. It consists also in resolving internally the disapproval of all acts of misappropriation as immoral. Our truth-seer *sāstrakāras* go to the length of suggesting that not repaying one's debt or fulfilling one's obligations is also stealing. They point out that a man is born with five kinds of debts (*ṛṇa*), viz, *bhūta ṛṇa* (debts to subhuman beings), *ṛṇa* (debts to society), *pitṛ-matṛ ṛṇa* (debts to our parent), *ṛṣi ṛṇa* (debts to seers and sages from whom we have inherited our culture) and *deva ṛṇa* (debts to Gods). Only by acknowledging our indebtedness to them and serving them in right earnest can we try to repay at least partially.

*Śauca* which is placed under *niyama* stands for purity both of body and mind. External purity of body can be had through bathing etc. Internal purification of mind can be obtained only through good thoughts, thoughts of well-beings to others. This is why so much importance is attached to *sadhu sanga* in our scriptures. When one attains *bāhya śauca* one become a verse not only to one's own body but also to other bodies, especially those of women resulting in the absence of desire for mating. *Āntara śauca* leads one to the intrinsic pleasure and bliss of mind resulting in the conquest of sense organs, mastery over them and concentration of mind.

By *saṁnyama* is usually meant to keep in control the power of different sense organs, especially the *jñānendriya* --- the sex organs. In *Manusamhitā* this is known as *indriyanigraha*. One who has mastered the art of controlling one's passion like *kāma* (lust), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed) etc. is to be regarded as one who has attained *saṁnyama*. This is why the students in the olden days were sent to the house of a preceptor to practice *brahmacharya*. When one gets firmly rooted in *saṁnyama* one attains the ultimate goal of life, i.e., *ātmasākṣātkāra*. Reality gets revealed to him and he becomes *mukta* being one with God.

So, it becomes perhaps clear now that in order to fight with the modern crisis, we should add something with our traditional concept of "Community, Identity, and Individual Right" which is *dharma*. It is to be achieved by all man in order to be considered as a man proper is one and uniform. Unless we become a man, it is impossible to control our greed i.e. it is impossible to get rid of such serious environmental crisis like 'Green House Effect.'

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