

QUO VADIS : WHITHER PHILOSOPHER?

It has been manifest in the writings of two great Indian writers, namely, Rabindranath and Radhakrishnan, that there must be an adjustment of the life of Indian Spirit to the modern needs or changes in the world. It is necessary to get rid of the cramped and confined air of spiritual aloofness and lethargy in order to enter into the full freedom of Universal Consciousness. It is imperative that India with her solid spirituality should give her riches freely to the westernized world. In fact, if the present tendencies go on, we shall cease to believe that there was anything like oriental philosophy and culture. To set the clock of progress of westernization back is impossible. The grim alternative offered is that India must so mingle and so infuse western ideals and thought with the spirit of the east to yield a spiritual peace. It is this purpose the two educationists are striving, each in his own sphere, but none the less effectively.

Sir Radhakrishnan writes: "Man's never-ceasing effort to read the riddle of the Sphinx and raise himself above the level of the beast to a moral and spiritual height finds a striking illustration in India. The problem of Indian Philosophy to-day is whether it is to be reduced to a cult restricted in scope and with no application to the present facts, or whether it is to be made alive and real so as to become what it should be, one of the greatest formative elements in human progress, by relating the immensely increased knowledge of modern science to the ancient ideals of Indian Philosophy". Dr. Rabindranath also holds an identical view, as could be seen by his recent expressions.

The problem which Radhakrishnan lays before the Indian Philosopher deserves to be analyzed into its component parts. It would be firstly necessary to know about the 'immensely increased knowledge of modern science' which are known as 'modern facts'. Secondly it is necessary to know what the ancient ideals of Indian Philosophy are. Thirdly, the ideal of Indian Philosophy is, according to Radhakrishnan to raise 'man from the beast to the stature of a moral and spiritual being'. Keeping

this in mind as the highest aspiration, man should think afresh. The old tenets of creation, the systems of thought unorthodox and orthodox, have to be as it were thrown overboard and one should construct Indian Philosophy on the basis of Reality, Raman-effect and other theories of the ultimate construction of matter, and also utilize the full resources of modern psychology, which is anything but psychology having 'lost its soul'

Radhakrishnan himself confesses in his great and scholarly work, *Indian Philosophy*, that at the end of the survey, nothing of vital value remains, and Indian Philosophy is yet in its infancy. In other words, Indian Philosophers of Newtonian and Einsteinian physics. They did not know about the indeterminacy at the bottom of all reality. They had somehow been content with nature-myths and crude physics and physiology. Their psychology was really interesting, but had not the disinterestedness that is needed in science. The scholastic period which alone comes in for a great deal of criticism had merely preserved in tact the entire fruitless results of the past.

Coming to 'modern facts' which are so ably and completely expounded in his *'Idealistic View of Life'*, Radhakrishnan finds that 'science has little to do with the fundamental problems of the world's ultimate being or its *raison de'être*. If science, then can give us just or nothing, and if at all, mere aspects of reality so thoroughly removed from the context of the real and the facts of modern science are merely tentative formulations of visionary scientists, how could the future Indian thinker mould his philosophy on the basis of those facts? Facts being undetermined, there can be no possibility of constructing a system like the neatly-knit productions of a Sankara, Ramanuja, Plato, or of a Spinoza, Leibniz or Hegel. A *priori* thinking alone can devise a system of philosophy. It is the despair of the modern thinker that is seen in the vision of his indeterminability, called otherwise freedom, the emergents, and such other vague expressions. Therefore, so far as the modern creation-myths are concerned they lack, as George Santayana expressed himself, even in the charm and naive qualities of true art of the old myths.

Perhaps, the modern, facts have to be constructed as the material, industrial and economic gifts offered by way of increased comfort, increased unitariness, the conquest of space and time, and racial and cultural contacts. India, which refused allowance to foreign thought and fusion of alien culture must face the modern world with its complicated machinery. Indian slowness and unassimilative genius must now be made to adjust to the modern conditions of living. This is a possibility. The wisdom of the silence, which has been the chief characteristic of India might be made to quieten the speed and excitement of the west. The throbs of western speed must find their solution in the meditation of the East. It is upto the West to release the dormant nature of the East and make it figure in the World as the prophet of peace and poise.

Too sharply have the two been divided, too hopelessly have materialism and spirituality been divorced, that it would require a supreme temper to see their unity and complementary character. It would require a holistic attitude to see that psychology and science are not identical but complementary. If psychology is reduced to mere science, then, as Dr. Radhakrishnan says, we can never find the *raison de'tre* of the world, least of all of ourselves. It is the business of the Indian Philosopher of the future to apply himself strictly to the discovery of the self which is not available in the west. His purpose is to discover for the sake of the west. His purpose it to discover for the sake of the world the truth of existence which is his spirit, which is human, unique and creative of supreme harmony. As Gandhiji has expressed himself, even lately, it is his purpose to discover the truth whose power is infinite, human, and supremely making for harmony. The function of the future Indian thinker is clearly this, to discover the self, which is the portion of the Divine, in terms of space and time, in the figures of mutual relationship in the world, so that the individuals may enrich the society, whole humanity, with the sacred perfume of the eternal here and now.

If, on the other hand, the Indian thinker should go on trying to adjust his philosophy to the changing conditions and findings of science, we shall, as Mr. Joad said, go on adjusting our philosophies every ten years. And yet we will not have

anything to live by. Further, the aspiration of Dr. Radhakrishnan can never be realized by such efforts. Man would yet be the animal he is, and the divine event, for it is nothing less than divine when man becomes man, can never happen.

It is only when man becomes really man or human, that he can be trusted to use the knowledge and powers that science grants wisely and for all. Else it cannot but become a menace not only to humanity and civilization but to life itself. Such a disaster to civilization must at all events be averted., and finally, be made impossible. To avert we have the niggardly League of Nations and compromising League of Intellectual Co- operation. But to make it impossible, is wanted a genuine culture of the individual, the discovery of his immortal essence, supreme spirituality and integrality and humanity. In other words , what is required is the finding of the uniqueness of each individual, his self which is supremely divine. This is the supreme truth, 'the ancient ideal of Indian Philosophy'. Not all the centuries that have rolled by can retract their supreme value, and their promise is the guiding hope of Indian Thought through millennia. It is this that Rabindranath constantly speaks of as the contribution that India can make to Humanity at large.

It is this discovery of the Self that can transform all animal values and create the world of man. That alone can make the world safe for applied science. It is the true spirit of Religion that can safeguard life. And the 'religion we need' is the 'Religion of Man'. The constancy with which an Indian thinker follows this goal, and the fidelity to it all costs, whatever may be the outcome just at present, will mark him out as the supreme Indian Philosopher. To ape the speed of the West, to conquest with western science, and to model one's thought on the findings of the West, can only compromise the situation, and will never lead to the aspiration expressed by the ancient Seers!

Eminently are both the thinkers, Rabindranath and Radhakrishnan , fulfilling their allotted task of interpretation of the West to the East and the East to the West.

But it is very clear that Gandhi alone does it on the lines of the ancient aspiration of “self-discovery”.