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INVOCATION

Always aim at truth make your mind obedient to truth,
let your speech correspond to truth and your conduct sub-servient to truth.

* * * * *

The tidal wave of deeper souls
Into our inmost being rolls
And lifts us unawares
Out of all meaner cares.

- *Emerson*

* * * * *

Our dependence upon God ought to be so entire
And absolute that we should never if necessary,
in any kind of distress, to have recourse to human
consolation.

- *Thomas a Kempis*

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Editorial

King Arthur just before his passing away admonished his only surviving knight, Sir Bedivere, when he disobeyed him, though out of his love for the master, that whatever the consequence, obedience is a great virtue in itself and must be practiced by all, high and low, - “Deep harm have now become commonplace and hundreds of school essays have been written on them. Though trite, they have not lost their significance even in the affairs of today. In Assemblies and Parliaments, nay, even in the ordinary committee meetings, when rulings from the chair are given, though unjust and induced by contempt, ill will or senility, these words should be remembered and obeyed with dignified silence as far as possible. Shouting and counter-shouting as protest, noisy demonstrations, now a familiar sight in Parliaments, cause great harm to society and lead to confusion.

But the doubting mind asks: “Is obedience the only virtue and disobedience evil?” It is argued that in a democratic society where individualism is sanctified, this morality is out of date and confrontation is inevitable, for progress cannot be achieved without opposition to old and stagnant order of things which have out-lived their day. A strong minority, entrenched in its privileges, tolerated by a dumb and supine majority, is the greatest source of evil in a society. The man who thinks and feels and is out to destroy the order which allows and guards the vested interests of the privileged minority. He is like Ishmael in the desert hated and spurned not only by those who stand to lose but also by those for whom he fights – that supine majority who fear to wake up and claim their right. But ultimately he must come to his own and for that consummation must hold his soul in patience.

Undaunted Rammohun

Dr. Saroj Mohan Mitra

The fact is that Rammohun embraced with respect all persons in whom he perceived greatness. As a result of this attitude he enjoyed a unique position among all who came to know him. Rammohun had an extremely busy schedule of work, furthermore there were constant discussions and deliberations with different people on various subjects. He did not have even a day's respite. Over and above this he was regularly invited to parties which he had to attend.

On the 7th of September, 1831 Mr. Charles Grant took Rammohun to the King of England William the fourth. For the occasion Rammohun dressed as a Brahmin in Kurta pajama and turbun for the meeting. Later on he was given the singular honour of being seated among the ambassadors of different countries during the coronation ceremony of William the Fourth. Rammohun initially took up residence at Cumberland Terrace at Regent Park. However finding the place very expensive he shifted to Bedford Square near the house of the brother of David Hare. The two brothers kept in touch with Rammohun regularly right up to the time of his passing away.

A principal reason for Rammohun's England visit was to effect certain amendments to the charter of the East India Company before it was further renewed by the English Government. Because of this Rammohun had been invited to appear before the Select Committee appointed by the House of Commons to give evidence. This committee had been formed to enquire into the matters of India. The deposition made by Rammohun to this Committee against their enquiries on the judicial system, the conditions of the people of India, their difficulties and complaints was of great importance. The committee's questions and the answers given by Rammohun were annexed to the report submitted by them.

MESSAGE OF THE AGE

P. SITARAM BRAHMAM

Brahmo Samaj which was inaugurated at the threshold of the New Age, Brahmo Samaj which appeared on the scene of Indian life amidst confusing and conflicting forces, Brahmo Samaj which awoke the soul of India from centuries of slumber, Brahmo Samaj which infused new values into the fields of Art, Literature, Public life, Brahmo Samaj which was a renaissance movement in Modern India – what became of it? Where is it? Keeping pace with the changing times and needs of the people it came out of a small institution, became a force and assuming various names and forms is indirectly influencing mankind.

Since it became diffused and the influence is indirect, the concentration, clarity became diluted. A review with a fresh look is necessary. Where a liberal outlook is asserting, a progressive attitude is making headway, a rational and humanistic approach in matters religious is valued, where complementary truths and synthesis are honoured – there Brahmo Samaj is working silently.

To realize the uttermost truth of oneself and unity with man on the basis, direct relationship with God through worship is the royal path. God is one and the same for everyone. He is neither Hindu nor Christian nor Muslim. He does not have our creeds and traditions. It is possible to have a common worship of common God and meditate on His nature, attributes and ways by all believers irrespective of their creeds, beliefs and traditions. On August 20, 1828, Rammohun Roy initiated such a worship for unity with God and with man through God. He wrote a trust deed setting forth the aims and objects of worship and indicating the code of conduct of those that come for worship and the way for maintaining the Mandir, the house of worship. That Trust Deed is the basis for Brahmo Samaj. His life and writings are its commentary.

Rammohun Roy's successors brought out some of the implications of Brahmo Dharma. Some of them were applied to social problems. Attempts were made to strengthen the organization and make it well-knit. In those efforts there was some serious deviation from Rammohun's ideal.

Worship for spiritual well-being is the life-breath of Brahmo Dharma. Brotherhood of man is abiding and leads to welfare only when it is based on soul's relationship. Unity of mankind on the basis of unity of God. Differences of belief, creed, tradition, and of opinions on any issue are to be respected so far they are not against Monotheistic Faith and brotherhood of man. Unity is possible when freedom to think and believe is tolerated.

Brahmo Dharma is not a new religion, not a separate religion from other religions. The common ground of all Theistic Dispensations is Brahmo dharma. It is the latest Common Multiple of religions. It is the new religious perspective. It is neither bound nor totally against any tradition. It is the one with the spiritual content of every religion. It is against many popular beliefs and practices. Differences should be corrected and attuned to Monotheistic Faith and brotherhood of man. Such differences that cannot be corrected and attuned to have to be given up. The unity sought by Brahmo Dharma is like the unity of colours in rainbow – no colours gives up its identity and individuality. No colour is aloof. No colour quarrels with others. None dominates over others. Each colour influences other colours and receives the influence of other colours. The aim of Brahmo Dharma is more to unite the hearts of people not much their creeds and beliefs. It is in link with cultural, traditional, historical background of the region.

In every religion the fundamental truth is eclipsed. The cause for it is not time factor only but more the information of traditions and iron-rigid regulations to protect traditions. Aids intended to be of help assumed supreme importance. Truth became insignificant before the domination of untruth. Religion which has to be

associated with changing life became mechanized and dead routine. Religion became a dividing force.

To save the soul of religion, Rammohun Roy fought with all his might. He said, “Brother, brother, ours is a Universal religion,” with tears in his eyes. Addressing people of the world he exclaimed, “Nations, behold your God, rejoice, rejoice.”

The God is one and the same for all and is residing within every person is ignored by every religion in practice. Symbols and idols intended to be of help became the object of worship. In which temple is archana, puja offered to the God of the Upanishads? Worship has to be offered to God, not to man or idols, symbols or photos and frames of photos. Worship should be for improving one’s nature, not for fulfillment of greedy desires and success in exploiting other people.

Monotheism is a simple word. The wealth of its meaning is as deep and wide as the universe. God is One. That One is greater than All. It includes and excludes everything. There is no time or place without His presence. Like a mighty tree in a minute seed. He is present in full in every split-second of time and pin-point of space. Then what is auspicious moment and inauspicious moment? What is holy place and unholy place? The basis for this discrimination is our fear, weakness, superstition, narrow-mindedness. There is no truth, no justification in this division. That moment when we forget Him is inauspicious. That place where we violate His law is unholy. Even if there is truth in the planetary positions, they are influences. Planets have not decision-making and determining powers. They themselves are under control of God. For fear of Him Fire burns, the Sun shines, Winds blow, Clouds rain and Death which does not spare anybody discharges its duties in strict obedience to His law – says the Upanishadic seer.

The Sun is a Kshatriya planet. His son Saturn is a Sudra. There were inter-caste marriages even among planets long ago! (According to Indian astrologers the Sun

is a planet, not a Star). These planets sometimes get angry with us. Our pujas pacify them.

Wherever there is truth, whenever it was revealed it belongs to God. So it is God's believers. Like a swan that separates milk from water, a truth-seeker separates truth from all that is associated with truth applying his reason and conscience and accepts in the form and proportion applicable to him at a given stage of his evolution. Complementary truths cannot be independent and isolated pieces. They should not be like patches of beggar's blanket. They should be synthesized.

Evolution is progressive unfoldment of Divinity. Suppression of talent or growth is going against God's law. Counteraction of progress or change is violation of the Divine movement.

Brotherhood of man, in expression of behavior (thought, word, deed) is humanism, unilateral and unconditional under all circumstances. It has no geographical boundaries. It is not limited to a community, sect, tradition or nationality. Humanism is a Divine quality in human limitations. Brotherhood of man is an integral part of Monotheistic concept. If violence is inevitable, it has to be like surgical operation. Communalism, Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, Tradition, National egoism do not go together with Monotheism. Humanism is the foundation for God-realisation. Monotheism is multisided and is a solvent of many problems.

Drawing inspiration from worship of the One, dealing with humanistic approach with man and matters, adopting a progressive attitude of mind is Brahma way of life.

Two hostile forces are on either side at elbow distance which constantly dissuade, discourage, tempt and threaten, warn this pattern of life: Fundamentalism and Materialism of Charwaka. "God is Supreme Consciousness including and

exceeding all. No two options. To how many is it possible to worship? What are we? Our ancestors in their wisdom, with sympathy for us invented simple, easy, short-cut methods. Let us make use of them and have the benefit and show gratitude to them.” say the fundamentalists. “Where are Sat and Chit? Who has seen? Who has shown? It is all fancy and fantasy. Life is for enjoyment, not for suffering. Enjoyment is in possession not in giving up. It is height of folly to lose pleasures of life for something that does not exist or for something of doubtful reality. Your Sat and Chit cannot get a seat for your boy in Nursery Class of the school without giving bribe. Why do you waste your life and suffer? See, how unscrupulous people are rapidly coming up in life with wealth and influence Is the advice of Charwaka’s Materialism. These two schools do not agree with each other. But, they are one in destroying pure Theistic way of life.

A person devoted to pure Theistic way of life should be firmly indifferent to these devilish suggestions and pursue his way with clarity of thought, firmness of heart and strength of will.

Struggles are not merely between reformers and anti-reformers, but between liberty and tyranny; between justice and injustice; between right and wrong... Liberal principles have been long gradually, but steadily, gaining ground, notwithstanding the opposition and obstinacy of despots and bigots. - Raja Rammohan Roy

CRISIS OF PROGRESS

Kishori Shastri

There is no denying the fact that man has traversed a long way to achieve the present state of progress in the fields like Science, Economy, Education, Literature, Religion, Culture etc. But yet doubts hover if the so-called progress is on the right track. Is it vertical as grossly horizontal? Has it offered expected peace and harmony or merely comfort and consumerism?

The responses appear to be negative. The basic horizontal progress we have been aiming at can hardly ensure the all-round progress in the true sense of the term. It administers balm for temporary relief only instead of permanent one. Heinous crimes like murder, violence, sex, deceit are on steady rise. The spirit of Indianism in the form of love, service, co-operation, tolerance etc. is on the wane. Paradoxically, man is boating across the waters without a drop to drink!

The gigantic question is why. Why do people shiver in cold under woolen garments while the sages and hermits feel quite comfortable under the blue firmament? Why can't they live a carefree life even with a lot of money in possession while the poor but honest, though meager in number, laugh away at ease miseries and misfortunes?

The difference exists because the haves are not satisfied with what they have and long for more to possess by hook or by crook. This canker of insatiable greed eats into their vitals leaving them in the mire of mirage of material growth more and more. They have little or no control over them and thus are drifted towards defaults, dissociation, disharmony and destruction. They forget that "Life's but a walking shadow". Nothing is theirs, every thing is His. They're just the passengers proceeding headlong towards the terminus. What a fall!

What we need badly is good sense that tells how to overcome the short-comings and how to generate wisdom. The truth is that Supreme Power has created man

with a blend of divinity and animality. He wants man to sift away the nails of animality and to find out divinity. They should feel that not only the geophysical pollution is high but also the mental and better to say spiritual pollution is thick and deep-rooted. The extremely high percentage of individual gain in personality is responsible for deformed and degenerated humanity. They forget to remember the *Avtars* They've got here in the World like Christ, Buddha, Mahvira and a galaxy of other mortal luminaries who tried to teach people to be rich in qualitative progress. They've displayed through their way of life that willing man can extricate themselves from the vortex of vain volition and reach the Eternal, the absolute, the Almighty. But foolishness guides people to fall victims to crude six senses such as sex, rage, greed, infatuation, intoxication and falsehood.

As such the sort of progress people boast of today is an off-shoot Science and technology enabling them to taste a great leap from candle to solar power, from cart to aircraft, from coupon or a short strip of cloth to costly attire. It is interesting to note that Saint Irving has rightly set apart gross progress and grand progress in his one-act play. Through two diametrically opposite principal characters professor and mother. Professor considers the invention of most lethal and fatal weapon that can destroy the human race within a fraction of a second as the most successful achievement, while his sister an embodiment of universal motherhood – castigates this success as trifle as possible and advocates humanism *Summum bonum* in human world. Sister here happens to be the logo for vertical progress.

Yes, man cannot dwarf or despise quantitative progress or horizontal progress at the cost of existence, as that's suicidal. But at the same time, man mustn't ignore the complimentary vertical progress even in the least that combined together with the horizontal progress can make the total shape of the earth, nay, the lovable and habitable human world. The great philosopher Dr. S. Radhakrishnan rightly says: 'There is no doubt that we are at the moment a confused people. We believe that this piling up of armaments may by mistake or accident result in annihilation of

the human race. We know the two impulses are conflicting with each other in each human being. Man is a paradoxical being full of contradictions, glorious and yet scandalous. He is one who is the crown of creation, at the same time he belongs to the scum of creation also” (The inward life ps-138-139). Yes, what has been emphasised upon here is that scientific progress alone cannot lead people to “India the land of dream”, as Hegel opined about India in his “Lectures on the Philosophy of History”.

As regards the conflict between materialistic growth and humanistic growth, Dr. Radhakrishnan accuses people of over dependence on Science and technology in one hand and a tendency of castigation of values in human life on the other. He says, “There is an increasing emphasis on Science and technology, an emphasis which requires us to see the latest methods for the purpose of satisfying the legitimate aspirations of the submerged peoples of the world.” We cannot ignore the truth that “Science should not serve any one nation. It is not its purpose to gain utility or achieve progress. Its one endeavor is a disinterested disclosure of truth, to know things as they are. To know truth is the purpose of Science”. (Evolution of Science and Man). Again, “Science is not merely a technique or a specialization; it is a habit of mind. It is a way of looking at things, the capacity to rid ourselves of every kind of prejudice and look at the object in its entirety and its objectivity, removing ourselves as much as possible from the investigation of the things.” (Science as a habit of mind).

[To be continued in the next issue ...]

Man and Tiger: Whose Territory is it anyway

Jay Mazoomdaar

Independent journalist and film maker

Given the conflict in Sunderbans, it is time to look beyond the stock paradigm of habitat loss and a shrinking prey base.

Restoring the creepy mangrove forests to their erstwhile impregnability, we are told, would stop tigers from straying. Allowing the prey base of the delta to bounce back to abundance, we are assured, would discipline the big cats to a wild-only diet. Till then, we have no option but to catch and throw every tiger we find back to forests (or zoos) and firefight conflict.

Sounds logical? But there are too many holes in this bucket.

Habitat and prey base restoration are two imperatives of conservation. But even if tigers are offered undisturbed wilderness in Sunderbans (an ecological impossibility, given the population density), some animals will still be walking out to the fringes. If people south of Canning suddenly give up fish and wild meat and each tiger gets a thousand choices every time it feels hungry, some will still target cattle for the ease of hunting.

We must understand that a wild animal does not stray – a verb popular with the media to describe forays outside forests. Animals move as purposefully as we do. So elephants walk long distance between forests and explore new areas when traditional routes are blocked. Tigers look for areas unoccupied by other tigers to mark individual territories, or simply set out looking for easy food, even following potential mates.

Wild animals are not supposed to follow the boundaries we draw to demarcate sanctuaries or national parks. One way of minimizing their movements is to connect pocket habitats into a vast landscape. But even the best managed mangrove tiger reserve in Sunderbans will always be hemmed by villages in the north and the west.

However, unlike what we are given to believe, carnivores do not prey on humans. Most attacks happen accidentally or in self-defence. Data (1984-2006) available from Bangladesh shows that of all the Sunderbans tigers that killed people, about 50 per cent killed only one person each. For a tiger population possibly in excess of 350, the number of repeated offenders was less than 4 a year, an insignificant 1 per cent of the lot.

Clearly, contrary to its unpopular image, even the lean, mean Sunderbans tiger does not consider us food. In 23 years between 1984 and 2006, tigers killed 490 people in Bangladesh. At an annual average of 21 casualties, it is far below the number of deaths caused by snake or dog bites. Even road accidents claim lives more frequently.

Significantly, the conflict has been less pronounced in our part of Sunderbans. Between 1994 and 2002, tigers entered villages this side of the border just 25 times, at an annual average of about 3 cases. But then, we panicked and started capturing any tiger spotted in and around habitations to dump them back where we thought they belonged or packed them to zoos. So the annual average of “tiger-straying” cases increased to 7 in the next 3 years. The number of human casualties came down initially but as we continued to capture and shuffle the tigers around, the conflict only worsened.

Removing an animal from its territory only allows the young of the species to fill in. During the capture, the animals confront menacing crowds and are often chased around. The traumatised animals are released in unfamiliar territory far away from the capture site. If you have ever tried to get rid of domestic cats by dropping them a few blocks away, you will know the futility of the exercise. Animals have strong homing tendencies and they invariably come back. Now imagine stressed wild animals trying to home back, moving long distances through densely populated areas. There are records of a leopard travelling 100 km and an elephant trudging 180 km to return to their native territory. While the leopard killed six people and mauled 12 on her way, the bull killed one and injured two.

When an animal endangers human lives, it should be put to sleep. But we cannot keep shuffling animals in the pretext of perceived danger and, in the process, create conflict. A random sampling of my notes shows that Sunderbans tigers have been repeatedly sent from Jharkhali to Dhulibhasani, or from Gosaba to Netidhopani. Were they monitored for territorial conflict (given that some of these animals were males) or further displacement or homing records or abnormally aggressive behaviour?

Bangladesh forest department has not tried routinely shifting tigers but, surprisingly, recent data show that the western segment of Bangladeshi Sunderbans, including Talapati island bordering India, has recorded the maximum conflict. Last month, it was learnt that a tiger released close to the border had since moved into Bangladesh. We need to monitor the cumulative cross-border impact of translocation since we have released quite a few tigers in Katuajhuri forests and the Harinbhanga river next to the border.

Could it be possible that the frequently displaced tigers of Sunderbans are getting increasingly disturbed on both sides of the border due to our needless intervention? We do not yet know. Fortunately, the tigers of Sunderbans are now in the hands of a few very able scientists working on either side of the border. Hopefully, sound science and meticulous studies will soon be able to influence management more meaningfully.

Till then, let's remember the basics. We cannot keep animals in the wild away from us, at least not in a country as crowded as ours. But we need not panic at the mere sight or presence of the wild since they are not looking for us. A certain degree of damage – crop raiding, livestock lifting or even occasional attacks on humans – is inevitable.

Knowing this, we are free to make the choice if we want wildlife around. The choice may not be equally obvious for a marginalised Sunderbans villager and a city wildlifer. Between them, all of us can join the jury. But we have no right to brand a species as man-eater because we want to justify the gun.

TRUTHS LEFT UNSAID

Charles Easton

Life in the presence of God is, rich and gracious. In thought of God sorrow and sighing flee away. Those who love God find it their supreme joy continually to offer him delighted thanks-giving. When we erase the traditional picture of heaven our speaking, these truths are often left unsaid. Until we are ready with new ways of saying them the perennial truth of heaven is overlooked. We may say that heaven is a state of mind and satisfy the modern intellect. But we need other words to fire the modern spirit.

Everyone has heard how it was said, "The Kingdom of heaven is within you." Heaven is living near to God and he who loves does that. Men have spoken long and often of how much they must give up to be sure of reaching heaven when they died. Who ever gives himself or herself in love dwells here and now in the presence of God, which is heaven.

Energetic folk have thought a somewhat monotonous fate waits the saints who must engage in perpetual praise of God. Whoever lives consciously heaven of God's presence cannot help but continually give him thanks for riches of human life. Diamonds glint in the granite sett, pearls hang in the dewy grass, sapphires shine in the eyes of his beloved. He who is in heaven often times despairs of being able sufficiently to give thanks.

Heaven is Love, Joy, Peace. It is praise and it is prayer and all besides. Some have thought of seven heavens, but 70 times even cannot number all the mansions of divine experience. Heaven is wherever men and women stand consciously in the presence of God. Shall Unitarians therefore be afraid to mention the word lest they be deemed old-fashioned and out of date? We cannot speak forth our religious convictions without words, and old words find a readier, response than

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For the month of June 2012**

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