

The Upanishads and Ideological Conflicts

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Abstract

The modern age is in search of ideologies which yield the fruit of maximum character. This signifies according to Vedanta the simultaneous presence of intensity and extensity. Vivekananda presented Vedanta a fearless philosophy of life which helps man to frame ideologies for himself combining the intensity of the fanatic with the extensity of the materialist. It derives its intensity from its inward spiritual penetration, its extensity from its onward human concern in which it upholds reason as the guide. Such an ideology gives in the words of Vivekananda, a character deep as the ocean and broad as the skies. The respect for what is best in man and the science which will proceed to deliver man from bondage to the slavish part of himself is what the 'Upanishads' developed ages ago in India.

Keywords *Adhatma vidya, Intensity, Extensity, Scientific, Deliberation, Ideologies, Fanatic, Materialist*

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The modern world is in the grip of various ideologies ,of which the most effective ones are those which are most narrow and exclusive. Upto the modern period ,religion, especially those of the semitic family-Judaism, Christianity and Islam were the nurseries of these exclusive and narrow ideologies. But in the modern period as religions are wisely shedding this vice of narrowness and exclusiveness it has moved over to the socio-political fields. The eclipse of liberal ideologies in these fields is one of the more glaring features of the twentieth century. Calm and clear reason has all but disappeared from vast segments of man's socio-political ideologies..They seem to be under the grip of the blind attachments, fears and hatreds of his collective unconscious. It is a heartening sign of the second half of this century that man's collective reason organized in international groups and associations, is waging a slow but successful struggle to tame the blind forces of his collective unreason in these fields .Setbacks there maybe, but nothing can thwart permanently the onward march of this struggle for it is the manifestation of the time spirit. Behind it is the dynamic energy of that scientific reason and enlightenment of the modern age whose impact is already evident in the field of religion for which it provided the milieu and the stimulus to struggle to liberate itself from the blind forces of man's collective unreason and make it function in the light of reason.

Scientific deliberations are generally conducted in a calm atmosphere and differences of opinion are tolerated. This was absent in the field of religion due to the very initial divorce of reason from religion. This is changing fast. Encounters between religions are increasingly taking place today in an atmosphere of decreasing emotional temperatures. This dawn of sanity in inter-religious relationships is a priceless gift of reason as expressed in Vedanta and modern thought .It is reasonable to expect that this light of reason will eventually succeed in conquering unreason and in introducing sanity,in the socio-political fields as well. This may take longer as these fields are the arenas of man's search for power and pleasure, largely at the dictats of the blind forces at his lower sensate nature when reason succeeds in establishing a measure of sanity in this field. Democracy which upholds the human dignity and equality and which has been under constant threat from these underground forces of human nature will become firmly established as the best political and social value and technique. The struggle for sanity will continue till the position with respect to ideologies will become reversed, so that, unlike now, the most effective ones will be those which are most broad and inclusive.

But this needs the understanding not only of scientific reason, but also of Vedantic reason for the latter alone has the capacity to purify the emotional springs of man's energies ,centred in his worldly and religious aspirations, of all their

narrowness and exclusiveness ,retaining intact ,at the same time ,their intensity and dynamism. This our scientific reason is unable to do by itself, when it eliminates narrowness, it tends to destroy also the energy of the emotions in the process.

Hence the contribution of the Upanishads in bringing about consummation is going to be vital and pervasive .Ideals and ideologies are vital to the human life and achievements ,they give direction to powerful human emotions. Without their help ,man becomes flabby and ineffective and often blunders all along. If a man with an ideal commits a thousand mistakes, says Vivekananda, a man without an ideal commits fifty thousand. Hence the dictum of Vivekananda let sects multiply but sectarianism must go. Narrowly conceived ideals have done as much harm as good in religion and politics. Intensity was obtained at the cost of extensity ,on the other hand ,has always resulted in a reduction of intensity. The current flows fast in a narrow stream. When the rivers broadens the current loses in intensity.

This has been the dual choice before man with respect to ideologies. The modern age is in search of ideologies which yield the fruit of character. This signifies according to Vedanta ,the simultaneous presence of intensity and extensity. Vivekananda presented Vedanta as a fearless Philosophy of life which helps man to frame ideologies for himself combining the intensity of the fanatic with the extensity of the materialist. It derives its intensity from its inward spiritual penetration and its extensity from its onward human concern ,in both of which it upholds reason as the guide such an ideology gives ,in the words of Vivekananda a character deep as the ocean and broad as the skies. Vedanta considers this as the true line of human evolutionary advance. And it has given to the modern age the example of such a character in Sri Ramkrishna, who was not only the very personification of the intensity of religion, but also encompassed in his infinite sympathy, atheists and agnostics along with believers belonging to the worlds diverse and often mutually hostile religions.

The modern world is experiencing a far reaching re-assessment in all aspects of human life and thought initiated and sustained by the positive sciences and modern technology, this process began as an intellectual movement but soon developed into a dynamic socio-political force. In its methods and results , it was as much a destructive force as a constructive one. It lifted man from many fears and uncertainties of his primitive past and landed him in new and more gnawing fears and uncertainties. It destroyed many a fable and myth and superstition embedded in his past traditions and challenged and continues to challenge the credentials of everyone of his beliefs and practices in the moral, religious ,socio-economic and other field of his life. These are solid gains ,but they are not enough ,they have lengthened the ropes without

,however, strengthening the stakes as the bible puts it. The tree of life has branched wide without correspondingly rooting deep. In the modern achievement ,the sciences of nature have for outstripped the sciences of man, leaving man unstable, with his centre of gravity always outside of himself.Moral and spiritual values emerge only from the sciences of man. Referring to this imbalance, the bitter fruits of which are found in the shallowness and sterility of much of modern intellectualism and in the widespread cynicism among the intellectuals.(Bertrand Russel (The scientific outlook))

Man has been discipline by his subjection to nature. Having emancipated himself from this subjection he is showing something of the defects of slave turned master. A new moral outlook is called for in which submission to the powers of nature is replaced by respect for what is best in man. It is where this respect is lacking that scientific technique is dangerous. So long as it is present ,science having delivered man from bondage to nature ,can proceed to deliver him from bondage to the slavish part of himself.

This respect for what is best in man and the science which will proceed to deliver man from bondage to the selfish part of himself is what the Upanishads developed ages ago in India in her ‘Adhyatma-vidya’ in her science of the inner world of man, in her science of human possibilities in the world’s of Julian Huxley.

The intellect on which the light of the ‘Atman’ shines is far different from the intellect which is in thrall to the sense organs.

These two groups of sciences-the sciences of nature and the sciences of inner nature need to pool their resources together to advance man on the evolutionary path of total fulfilment. “Take away from Human society and what remains to a forest” says Swami Vivekananda.

Echoing this conviction, it appears that-the two great factors upon which all human development rests are the first spirit of religion and the spirit of science or knowledge. The phenomenal progress of the modern age depends upon both.

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