
UNIT I SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND MUHAMMAD IQBAL

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1.0. OBJECTIVES

One of the important aims of this unit is to give a gist of the philosophical thinking of both Vivekananda and Muhammad Iqbal. Swami Vivekananda, a great patriotic, dynamic philosopher and a vigorous religious preacher, finds his place in the history as the one who awakened the people of India from its age-old slumber and infused in it, a new life and spirit. He consecrated his life for the spiritual union and upliftment of the humanity with his deep insight. The thoughts of Vivekananda and Muhammad Iqbal are arranged in an academic and systematic manner. While writing this paper, only those subjects which appeared to be 'philosophical' were selected as their works cover a very large area. The unit provides the students a general idea regarding their stream of thoughts.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda was born in an educated and well-to-do family in Calcutta, on 12th January 1863. His father was a famous lawyer, educated and a well-versed person in modern liberal thought and scientific outlook. His mother was pious, wise and devoted to God. He studied the Western thought which ingrained in him the quality of critical enquiry and analysis. His inborn spiritual characteristics and his rational outlook were at tussle. He turned towards the Brahmo Samaj which rejected idol worship and formulated the formless worship of God. His meeting with Swami Ramakrishna in the year 1881 was the turning point in his life. He accepted Swami Ramakrishna as his friend, philosopher and guide. An extensive travel that he made almost

throughout India after the death of Ramakrishna in 1886 provided him the opportunity to get acquainted with the social and economical situation of the country. Meanwhile he participated in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. This particular meet witnessed the transformation of Vivekananda from an unknown sage to a spiritual and religious celebrity. He founded the Ramakrishna Ashram at Belur, near Calcutta. In 1899, he undertook a second journey to the West. He breathed his last on the 4th of July 1902.

Sir Muhammad Iqbal occupies a unique position in the contemporary Indian thought. He seems to be the only thinker of the contemporary times who tries to apply academic philosophical standards to Islamic thoughts. Mohammad Iqbal was born in 1876 at Sialkot. He received his early education at Sialkot and Lahore. In 1905, he went to Cambridge. For some time, he did research on Persian metaphysics at Munich in Germany. In 1908, he returned to Lahore and joined the bar as a barrister. He became very famous as a poet. Meanwhile he also showed a greater interest in his philosophical pursuits. He died in 1938 at Lahore. The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam was one of the important aims of his philosophical thinking. So, one can find a greater influence of Islam in the basic concepts and categories used by Mohammad Iqbal in his metaphysics. Persian philosophy also made a great impact in shaping his philosophy. He was also influenced by Islamic mysticism, especially, by Sufism. Apart from these, his contact with the western philosophical world also molded his philosophy.

1.2 THE PHILOSOPHY OF VIVEKANANDA

The philosophy of Vivekananda is born out of his strong awareness of the social, religious and economic conditions of Indian masses. He realized that the orthodoxy, superstitions, loss of faith in spiritual values etc., are the reasons for at least some of the social evils. The Hindu philosophy, especially, Vedanta which made him known as a Vedantist and the Buddhist philosophy made a great impact upon Vivekananda. Along with these Indian influences, he also carried, on his thought, the influence of Christianity. There were certain other influences too. For some time he was under the influence of Brahmo Samaj. It also seems that he was also influenced by the personality of Dayananda Saraswati. The Gita was also a source of constant inspiration to Vivekananda. But it must be admitted that the profoundest influence was that of his master Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa. It is right to say that swami Ramakrishna revealed him the spiritual path, unravelled and opened his soul, flooded the spiritual consciousness into his soul and removed the ignorance which obstructed and covered the wave and tide of the unbounded spirit within Vivekananda.

1.3 GOD, COSMOS AND HUMAN PERSON

The philosophy of Vivekananda is idealistic in the sense that he believes in the spiritual character of the ultimate reality. Vivekananda asserts that his idealism is not unrealistic but it is a living ideal capable of inspiring and attracting the human being towards itself. Vivekananda's idealism is monistic. He often describes reality in the fashion of the abstract monist. Basing himself on *Advaita* he says that reality is one absolute Brahman. According to him this Brahman is beyond space, time and causation, and as such it is changeless. But it does not mean that it remains the

same in all points of time. It rather means that the question of time is irrelevant to it. One cannot attribute qualities to the Absolute. It is indeterminate. But at the same time, an attempt can be made to give a working description of the Absolute. He tries to describe the Absolute as *Sat-Cit-Ananda*. Vivekananda believes that Absolute and God are not two. He likes to treat the Absolute and God under the same head. Metaphysically speaking, reality is absolute Brahman; the same reality viewed from the religious point of view is God. He feels that the *Vedantic* distinction between the Absolute and God is redundant. It is here that Vivekananda emphasises the all-pervasive nature of God. God is present everywhere and in everything. God is also presented as the one eternal principle. His assertion of God as a human god suggests that the human being bears the spark of Divinity within himself/herself. God is also conceived as the ultimate Ideal of life and existence. This Ideal can be reached through love. However, the question on the nature of God that Vivekananda speaks of (personal or impersonal God) is a subject of discussion. Many times he describes God as both impersonal and personal. But one who reads Vivekananda has more reasons to tell that he is inclined towards the personal God. But it does not negate his basic loyalty to the *Vedantic* understanding of God which speaks of an impersonal God. By way of presenting the personal nature of God, his main preoccupation was to bring religion closer to the common people.

The Cosmos: For Vivekananda, God is the only real principle and creation is God's creation. Therefore the creation is an aspect of God. Creation can be best understood as the expression of the creator in finite forms. But the problem remains unsolved; how has the Infinite become the finite? He explains that the Absolute has become the universe by passing through Time, Space and Causation. This description of creation implies that in the Absolute there was no Time, Space and Causation. Then, where do Time, Space and Causation come from? If we say that they are independent entities and they are outside of the Absolute, it will have a repercussion on the ultimate monistic conviction of Vivekananda. But he solves this problem showing that Time, Space and Causation are not metaphysical entities but they are mere forms as they are not independent entities. Time, Space and Causation are dependent on our mind and they change with every change of our mind. One cannot have any idea of abstract space or abstract time or abstract causation. So they have dependent existence. Vivekananda reconciles with the idea of '*jagat*' '*mithya*' of Shankara telling that *Vedanta* does not assert the unreality of the world, but its *mityavada*; it merely emphasises that the world cannot have any fixed or absolute character of its own. It asserts the fact that world does not come out of God as a finished product and creation is not a completed process.

Maya: Vivekananda certainly borrowed the doctrine of Maya from *Advaita Vedanta*, but, at the same time, one can observe that his conception of Maya is not exactly similar to that of Sankara. Vivekananda shares his understanding of Maya with Sankara while telling that Maya is the principle of change, a power that makes creation possible. But Vivekananda disagrees with *Advaita Vedanta* where Sankara says that Maya is that power which creates illusion. Vivekananda believes that Maya does not necessarily mean being illusory or unreal. It is right to say that in his philosophy of Maya, Vivekananda seeks to express the essential characteristics of the world as it exists, where he says ".....Maya is not theory for the explanation of the world: it is simply a statement of facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being is contradiction..." So Maya is a convenient name for the fact of contradiction that the universe demonstrates. Our

whole life is a contradiction, a mixture of being and non-being. At places, in tune with the *Vedantic* thinking, Vivekananda also says that Maya can neither be defined as existence or as non-existence. Vivekananda places Maya somewhere in between Absolute being and Non-being.

Human Person: According to Vivekananda, the real human being is a sort of a 'concentration of spiritual energy'. Man\Woman is a spirit. Man\Woman is not what he\she usually appears to be. He tells that human is spiritual because he\she represents some aspirations and urges which only he\she is capable of having. So it is right to say that the philosophy of Vivekananda presents the human being as an organized unity of the physical and the spiritual. And it is a fact that the importance of body was never undermined in his philosophy.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. What is the teaching of Vivekananda on the Absolute and God?

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.....2. How does Vivekananda explain the concepts of Cosmos and Man\woman?

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3) What is the concept of Maya according to Vivekananda?

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1.4. YOGA - THE WAYS OF REALISATION

According to Vivekananda the soul realises immortality through the process of yoga. It means union or it also stands for a kind of discipline.

The **way of knowledge** (*Jnana yoga*): The realisation that bondage is due to ignorance is the basis of the way of knowledge. According to Vivekananda, ignorance is the inability to distinguish between the real and the unreal. In other words, it is the ignorance of the real nature of the things.

Ways of devotion (*Bakthi Marga*): This is the way of knowing God through intensity of feeling. Vivekananda says that strong emotions have the capacity to awaken and activate the potential powers of human being. Ordinary emotions can be converted into powerful feelings; ordinary love can be converted into Divine Love or Supreme Devotion. This is the *Bhakti Marga*.

The **way of action** (*Karma Marga*): According to Vivekananda, *Karma Marga* is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works. Man\woman has to remain in the world and has to keep on working as well as he\she can. A continuous doing of selfless work enables a person to rise above his\her self, and to feel oneness with everything which is nothing but the realisation of immortality, the realisation of oneness of everything.

The **way of psychology** (*Raj Yoga*): It is the way of realisation of immortality by controlling the mind and the body. Here the mind and the body are controlled by way of subjecting them to certain physical and mental disciplines. Although Vivekananda speaks of these four ways differently, he says that they are different ways for the realisation of the same goal.

1.5. TOWARDS UNIVERSAL RELIGION

For Vivekananda all religions are attempts to get beyond nature. Seen under this angle, religion appears to be synonymous with spiritual realization. Religion is not in books and temples; it is an actual perception. Only the person who has actually perceived God and soul has religion. Seen empirically as a process it is man's\woman's struggle to go beyond nature and to live in the freedom of the spirit. "Religion is not in doctrines, in dogmas, nor in intellectual argumentation; it is being and becoming, it is realization.

Basic elements of religion: Vivekananda distinguishes three main aspects in religion: philosophy, mythology and rituals. First, there is the philosophy which presents the whole scope of the religion setting forth its basic principles, the goal and the means to reach it. The second part is mythology, through which the philosophy is made concrete. The rituals make the philosophy of religion more concrete through ceremonies and various physical attitudes and expressions. In rituals and worship he finds three elements that are found in almost all religions: symbols, name and god-man. Symbols are meant to represent the idea behind them. Holy names are the external expressions of the form; the god-man becomes the special instrument by which the divine becomes manifest to us.

Unity of religions: All the religions are good since their essentials are the same. Each man\woman should have the perfect exercise of this individuality but the individualities form a perfect whole. Each religion, as it were, takes up one part of the great universal truth, and spends its whole force in embodying and typifying that part of the great universal truth. It is therefore addition not exclusion. The ideal to be pursued is assimilation and not destruction, harmony and not dissension. If we want to reach a real harmony we cannot be satisfied with an attitude of tolerance; tolerance is a passive attitude; we tolerate error and sin but we do not have to tolerate religions. Our attitude should be of positive respect, sympathy and understanding.

The Nature of Universal Religion: A religion is said to be a universal religion only if it is able to fulfil at least two conditions. First, it must be open to all individuals. Secondly, it must provide

satisfaction and comfort to every religious sect. Vivekananda is on that opinion that such religion is already there. One fails to recognize its presence as he/she is lost in the external conflicts of religions. First of all, religions are not contradictory to each other but they are complementary to each other. Problem arises when each religion concentrates only on one aspect of religion. Secondly, Vivekananda makes it clear that there can be contradictory views of the same thing. We view, understand and grasp the truth in our peculiar way. But they are basically of the same reality and therefore complementary to each other. By universal religion, Vivekananda does not mean a religion that will have one universal philosophy, one universal mythology or one universal ritual. The spirit of universal religion demands that one should have the respect for the other ones. A kind of positive acceptance is another important requirement for universal religion. The believer in a universal religion must be broad-minded and open-hearted. At least one element which is common to all religions can be articulated as the element of 'God'. According to Vivekananda, though different religions talk of different aspects of the Truth, as aspects of the same Truth, they are all one. So, to Vivekananda, that Truth is God. Vivekananda believes that the ideal religion must harmoniously balance all the aspects of religion namely, philosophy, emotion, work and mysticism.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. How does Vivekananda explain the concept of yoga?

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2. What is the nature of the universal religion that Vivekananda speaks of?

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1.6. THE PHILOSOPHY OF MUHAMMAD IQBAL

Nature of Intuition: Mohammad Iqbal is on the assumption that the ultimate truths which religion and metaphysics seek to emphasize are not known by us in the ordinary way. The ordinary way is the way of experience. In this level whatever is known is known under space-time dimension and is useful from the empirical and pragmatic point of view. But the reality, in itself, cannot be directly known in this level of experience. Basing himself on the Quranic idea on 'heart', he says that the heart is a kind of inner intuition or insight which brings us into contact with aspects of Reality. So, thereby, he presents the heart as the faculty of intuition and intuition is the way through which Reality can be apprehended directly. He also speaks of the important characteristics of intuition. The important character of intuition is its **immediacy**. Intuition is the immediate knowledge of the Reality because it does not require any medium. Secondly, intuitive knowledge is always **a unity or wholeness** which is not analyzable. In intuition the knower becomes one with the known and the distinction between the subject and the

object disappears altogether. Thirdly, intuition is a moment of **intimate relationship with the Supreme**. It is a feeling of the presence of the Divine. According to Iqbal, this intuitive experience has **an objectivity** about it. It is neither a subjective state nor merely a private and personal experience. The object of the intuition is not the mere creation of the individual's intellect. But the object of the experience is really there. Iqbal asserts that intuition is not the property of the mind or intellect, but it is the **property of the heart**. He also says that the intuitive experience helps one **realize eternity** in a moment. He further explains that this experience gives the individual a sense of the unreality of serial time. Lastly, he speaks of the **incommunicable** nature of this intuitive experience. It is not communicable because of the simple reason that it is the function of the heart. He also says that though the content of this experience cannot be communicated, a mystic can interpret this experience in terms of verbal form and this interpreted truth can be easily communicated.

1.7. CONCEPT OF SELF

Traditionally, self is considered as that principle which organizes the activities and the experiences of an individual and gives them significance different from the bodily activities. In line with the traditional understanding, Iqbal also says that the self is the principle of unity in the individual, but he asserts that it not opposed to the bodily. He affirms that the self gives unity even to bodily activities. He develops his idea of self in tune with the Quranic conception of self and prefers to use the word 'ego' for the self. He asserts the necessity to accept the reality of the self. He explains that no mental state can exist in isolation, but there must be a unity organizing all the mental states. Parts of the material object can exist as isolated, but mental state cannot. This principle of unity of inner life or of the mental state is called as ego. It is the ego which keeps all experiences organized and united. It shows that it is the ego which organizes and gives a final shape and directions to our various affections and experiences.

Iqbal seems to be against the doctrine of parallelism of the body and the soul. According to him, both the body and the soul are systems of acts and as activities they are close to each other. The self is a series of activities and it needs an environment on which it will act or to which it will react. In other words ego cannot remain in complete isolation, it must have a world. The ego is confronted with the world of non-ego, and it is through his experience of the world of the non-ego that the life of the ego grows and develops. We have seen that all the experience is organized by ego. Such a conclusion leads to one of the important questions in philosophy; does the ego determine its own activities or is it casually determined by something else? This question is all about the question of freedom. Iqbal is of the opinion that the ego has the capacity to choose its course of action and thereby ego is free. Another important character of the self is its immortality. According to him the self is immortal in spite of its apparent fact of death. He believes that the self has the capacity to survive death and thereby, it is immortal.

1.8. HIS CONCEPT OF GOD

Basing himself strongly on the Islamic understanding of God, Iqbal declares his firm conviction on monotheism. For him, the question of God is more important because it satisfies not only the religious urge of man\woman, but also his\her metaphysical curiosity.

God as the Supreme Ego: Iqbal believes that the universe is of the nature of a free creative force. He is of the opinion that the world-process is purposive and is rationally directed. According to him rational egos are capable of regulating and directing their own creative life. So it prompts us to think that there is a Being directing the creative life of the universe. So he comes to the conclusion that it is the Super Ego that guides the creative progress of the world. Here, he also explains the Quranic description of God as 'light'. Iqbal thinks that light is the nearest metaphor for understanding the nature of the Absolute Ego, which is the most perfect embodiment of dynamic and creative life.

Attributes of God: While talking about the attributes of God, he makes a distinction between the attributes apprehended by intuitive insight and those known through intellectual deliberations. Here, he mainly speaks of the intellectual attributes of God. According to him, creativeness, knowledge, omnipotence, eternity, immanence, transcendence etc. are some of the main attributes of God. **Creativeness:** the supreme Ego is creative in the way in which an ego is creative. He says that the Supreme Ego or God is creative in the inner way. It means that God creates completely from within himself. For Supreme Ego, creation means the unfolding of his own inner possibilities. His creativeness is infinite because these possibilities are infinite. **Knowledge:** for a finite ego or being, the knowledge is based on the distinction between the knower and the known. So the finite being knows 'the other' which is something different from the subject. But God is all comprehensive. So there is no 'other' for God. In other words, "in Him thought and deed, the act of knowing and the act of creating are identical". God himself is the object of His knowledge. God creates as He knows and knows as He creates. **Omnipotence:** Iqbal explains the Quoranic understanding of Divine omnipotence; the Divine omnipotence according to Quran, is intimately connected with the concept of Divine wisdom. One cannot neglect one of the important questions that the attribution of omnipotence to God raises. It raises the question of presence of evil in the world. He solves this problem by explaining the concept of freedom given to human by God for making it possible for him\her to bring out the potentialities latent in human beings. At the same time, human can use this freedom rightly or misuse this freedom for wrong choice. He considers that freedom is a basic requirement for goodness. So, he considers pain and suffering as the necessary aspects of the fact of freedom. He likes to treat both good and evil within the same whole.

Eternity: Iqbal does not treat eternity as a time concept. He does not speak of an idea of endlessness of time. God is considered eternal because He is the expression of the infinite possibilities latent in God. In this sense God is portrayed as eternal. **Immanence and transcendence:** According to Iqbal, God is both immanent and transcendent. But God is not immanent in the world as a pantheist understands. He is immanent in the world in the sense that the world is His creation. God is presented as transcendent in the sense that the God is beyond the grasp of the finite ego. So, by way of presenting God as a unity of infinite possibilities, the

metaphysical demand of human being is satisfied. And by conceiving God as personal and Supreme Ego, the religious demand is also satisfied.

1.9. THE NATURE OF THE WORLD

Like many of the contemporary Indian thinkers who are aware of the present scientific exploration in determining the nature of the material world, Iqbal also asserts the reality of the world. He asserts that the external world exists and is real. Before we enter into the question of the nature of the material world, it is necessary to understand Iqbal's conception of space and time. According to Iqbal, space and time are relative. They are relative not only to the different grades of being but also to the different levels of experience of the same being. The impression of space and time that we have will be different from the impression of space and time that other animals may have. He further explains that the physical world is understood in the analogy of the self. So the world is conceived as a continuous movement. He also finds that the universe also exhibits a tendency to egohood. The universe manifests a clear tendency to grow as an individual. And individual is a unity of its parts and the parts cannot exist apart from the whole. Iqbal applies the same principle to the universe where he says that even though one finds diverse and discrete aspects of the universe, there exists an inner unity among them all. He draws the conclusion by saying that the whole physical world can be viewed as an individual. This is the reason why Iqbal says that every detail of the world is an ego and the totality of the ego is the ego of the egos. So if the nature of the world is that of ego, it is nothing but growing. It has a reason, purpose and a plan and steadily progresses towards the realization of an end.

1.10. HUMAN DESTINY

In short, according to Iqbal the realization of immortality is considered as the ultimate human destiny. Immortality is presented both as soul's nature and as a person's destiny. Death is not the end of the soul. The soul survives the death and continues to exist even after death. But this is not all about immortality. One will be truly immortal only when these potentialities are fully and freely expressed. That is, one's real destiny, the realization and free expression of all the potentialities, is embedded in the self. Iqbal asserts that it is through persistent and continuous action one realizes it. It is in this sense that Iqbal presents immortality as ultimate human destiny. Iqbal tries to highlight three points in respect to immortality which The Quran speaks of. First of all he says that the finite ego has a beginning. It speaks of the finiteness and humanness of man\woman. The finite ego is a created being. So, immortality is that of the immortality of a created being and therefore, immortality does not mean attaining godhood. Secondly, he says that there is no possibility of its return to the earth. It implies that once the soul is free from the body, a person is free from the bondage of birth or re-birth and awaits the final judgment with regard to his\her destiny. So it does not involve a belief in rebirth. Thirdly, he states that finitude of the ego is not a misfortune. He criticizes those who are on the assumption that finitude is nothing but evil. He says that the dignity and uniqueness of the individual can be retained only when an individual is approached with his individuality.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. How does Iqbal look at the concept of God and what are the characteristics of this God?

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2. Explain his concept of the world with special reference to 'time and space'.

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3. Explain his concept of human destiny and the three points he highlights on human destiny.

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1.11. LET US SUM UP

Swami Vivekananda has revitalized the Indian thought. He identifies his thought with the philosophy of *Advaita* and gives the latter a new form. Brahman alone is real and the world is unreal. The body, life, mind, ego and the world are illusions. The Brahman is indeterminate, nameless, formless, eternal, existence, truth-consciousness and bliss. Every religion worships the same Absolute in different ways. Humanism is the dominant aspect in Vivekananda's philosophy and religion. The religion is expressed in service to humanity, universal brotherhood and humanism.

Iqbal is a mystic philosopher. Intuition alone manifests the truth of God and nature. It gives an organic knowledge. It reveals the nature of ego and helps communion with God. God evolves with the cosmos. He is potentially Infinite and is the conscious force. God is duration and there is no limit for his creativity. The relation between the God and ego is that of a garland with its beads. For him the external world exists and it is real. The ultimate human destiny is the realization of immortality. Death is not the end and the soul survives death. But often Iqbal is criticized for conceiving God as pure becoming and reducing God's nature to mere fluxional phenomena. Such a criticism has its ground on the fact that if God is ever evolving, he is an imperfect reality and growing towards perfection.

1.12. KEY WORDS

Idealism: The theory that maintains the ultimate nature of reality as based on the mind or ideas.

Pantheism: It means that the god is found in everything. It has view that the universe is permeated with God.

Maya: The term maya has multiple meanings. It is mainly centered around the concept of world.

Intuition: It is *a priori* knowledge or experiential belief characterized by its immediacy.

Parallelism is a theory related to dualism which suggests that although there is a correlation between mental and physical events there is no causal connection. The body and mind do not interact with each other but simply run alongside one another, in *parallel*, and there happens to be a correspondence between the two but neither cause each other.

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UNIT 2 MAHATMA GANDHI AND RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

No philosophical consideration will be complete without any reference to Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore who lived in the stirring and crucial time of the history of India and contributed a lot to the philosophical, ethical, social, political, religious, and economic systems and theories. The most important objective of this unit is to help the students follow the philosophical stream of thoughts evident in the works and teaching of both Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore.

Rabindranath Tagore is a religious poet. It is right to call him a seer, visionary or mystic. It is from his poetry that we know of his philosophy. He does not present his philosophy in an academic manner. His philosophical thoughts are scattered in his literature. So, one has to

systematically arrange his thoughts in a particular manner so as to make it fit into the mould of an academic philosophy.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi is a comprehensive system. His philosophy is not an abstract system of thought. Credit goes to him for blending philosophy with life, abstract principle with concrete reality of facts, religion with politics, and ethics with a programme for social evolution. His system is a synthetic unity of different sciences.

2.1 GANDHI: LIFE, INFLUENCE AND BASIC PHILOSOPHY

Gandhi was born in a Baniya family in Kathiavar, Porbanther, Gujarat in 1869. After his early childhood his family shifted to Rajkot. It is there he painfully and at times, tumultuously, spent the years of youth. After completing his high school studies, he left for England in 1887 where he qualified as a lawyer. Back in India he went to South Africa to deal with a legal matter. In South Africa, he became a leader of the Indian community. After several years at the service of the Indians of South Africa he left for India in 1914. At Ahmedabad, by the side of Sabarmati River, he built his *Satyagraha* ashram to prepare people for non-violent struggle. Soon he assumed an important role in India's freedom struggle. After a few limited attempts at utilizing the method of *Satyagraha* to deal with various injustices, he launched a nationwide agitation in 1919. Then he saw that people were not ready for a non-violent fight and he decided to suspend that struggle. After spending a long time in educating the people, he launched a nationwide action in 1930 (Quit India movement). After his confrontation with Dr. Ambedkar, he turned his attention to social problems such as untouchability and social inequality. In 1934, he left congress and withdrew from active politics. Back to the political scene in 1939, he organized a movement of individual *Satyagraha* as protest against the war politics of British government. After the war, when India's independence was drawing near, we find Gandhi deeply concerned with the Hindu-Muslim tensions. At the time of independence, he went to Calcutta to try to avoid bloodshed and violence. Back to Delhi, he was assassinated in 1948.

The main influences on him were from Hindu and Christian teaching. The Jain teaching with its radical demand of non-violence had also an early influence on him. However, in his mature years it is Gita that played the greatest role in his life. Gandhi understood Gita as the gospel of detachment and non-violence. Gita teaches that God is present in everything and that this divine presence leads us to see the basic spirituality of human life.

2.3 GOD AND TRUTH

We can find a basic consistency in his thought. The focal point of this consistency is the concept of truth. The quest to know 'truth' is an ever-unfinished quest and 'life is a continuous experiment with truth'. In this attempt of reaching truth, one relies on the two pillars of faith and reason. Gandhi seems to have two models to speak of God; a theistic model that is closely related to his old *Vaishnava* faith and an *Advaidic* type of absolutism. In the absolute model, God appears as an impersonal force or power or as divine law and as Truth. Gandhi agreed that we could say that God is love; but he felt that the word love is used in many ways and can be ambiguous. So he prefers to say God is truth. Later, Gandhi went further and said that truth is God. Wherever one finds truth, there one finds God also. Gandhi accepts the main features of Hindu tradition with regard to man\woman and the world. As a moral philosopher Gandhi's ethics is basically that of intuitionists. The still small voice within oneself must always be the final arbiter when there is a conflict of duty. This inner voice is the voice of God or the voice of truth. From the point of view of objective standard in ethics, Gandhi is an ethical naturalist. Man's\woman's nature is defined in terms of non-violence. When man\woman acts violently, he\she breaks the basic law of his\her own being.

Gandhi did not accept the principle that 'end justifies the means'. As the means so the end...there is no wall of separation between the means and the end...realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. While speaking about the fundamental moral virtues, he says: "Morality includes truth, ahimsa and continence. Every virtue that mankind has ever practiced is referable to and derived from these three fundamental virtues. Non-violence appears as the means and truth the goal. Continence appears to be necessary to reach the self-control which is necessary to dedicate oneself more and more fully to truth and non-violence."

2.4 NATURE OF THE WORLD

It is very difficult to outline precisely Gandhi's views on the nature of the world as his remarks on the nature of the world are both casual and scattered. But a close journey along with the works and words of Gandhi will tell us that he has a profound philosophy on the world. Gandhi believes that nature is the expression of God and it is the evidence of the all-pervasive reality. Gandhi says, "God manifests himself in innumerable forms in this universe and every such manifestation commands my reverence." Gandhi also observes a force behind the laws of the universe which maintains the world in harmony, gives an order and saves the world from destruction. For him, this force is nothing but God and the laws are nothing but the ways of the working of that force.

2.5 CONCEPT OF HUMAN PERSON

Gandhi feels that man\woman is a complex being. The bodily man\woman is the apparent man\woman; his\her body is natural in so far as it is akin to the other objects of nature. The body grows and decays according to the laws of Nature. But, this aspect of a human represents merely

the physical aspect. Man\woman is not merely a physical being. He\she has many other characteristics which are not just physical. He\she has consciousness, reason, conscience, will, emotion, and similar other qualities. He\she has an aesthetic sense, a feeling-sensibility, and an insight into the nature of good and bad. These are not physical activities, but rather these are all expressions of the real man-woman, of the spirit or soul present in him\her.

He believes that every individual is a mixture of the bodily and the spiritual. According to him, evolution is a change from the physical to the spiritual, aiming at the complete realization of Divinity. The elements of divinity, present in every human being, are expressed in different ways. They can be expressed by way of the presence of reason, conscience, free-will etc. He believes that man\woman can bring heaven on earth if he\she uses these Divine elements in the right manner. He also believes in the essential spirituality and goodness of every man\woman.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) Explain the Gandhian idea that ‘God is truth’?

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2) How does Gandhi explain the concept of ‘nature’?

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3) Explain the concept of man\woman according to Gandhi.

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2.6 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Gandhi speaks of non-violent society, non-violent state and non-violent *Swaraj*. “All societies are held together by non-violence, even as the earth is held in position by gravitation.” Gandhi did not give a blueprint of the non-violent society; from his writings we can see two main features of this society. First of all, decentralization of authority and village life: society based on

non-violence can only consist of groups settled in villages in which voluntary cooperation is the condition of dignified and peaceful existence. Centralization as a system is inconsistent with non-violent structure of society. Here we shall have both economic and social equality. Economic equality is the master key to non-violent independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour; it means leveling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and leveling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. This economic equality is to be achieved not by nationalization and compulsory acquisition of the wealth but by making the rich realized that they are not owners of the goods they have but they are only trustees of God.

For Gandhi social equality means a new approach to caste. Gandhi rejects the actual caste system because it contains the idea of inequality. The idea of inequality must go. However, Gandhi believed that we must keep the idea of hereditary transmissions of profession. Man/woman must remain faithful to his/her traditional family duties. But the idea of inferiority and superiority is totally repugnant to this. We must not however forget that the duty prescribed by one's caste does not limit one's action for society. Having performed one's hereditary duty one should free oneself to serve society in all possible ways.

Non-Violent State

Though he speaks of democracy, it is not a centralized democracy: 'In the true democracy of India the heart is the village. True democracy cannot be worked by twenty individuals sitting at the centre. It has to be worked out from below by the people of every village. The ultimate ideal of his political theory would rather be a state of enlightened anarchy; if national life becomes perfect and becomes self regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power, there is no state. But this ideal is never fully realized in life. Real *Swaraj* is reached when every man/woman has total political freedom. Concretely this is expressed in the following manner: "Real *Swaraj* will come not only by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, *Swaraj* is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority."

Satyagraha

The non-violent ways or means to attain the goal of *Swaraj* is *satyagraha*. It is the non-resistance of the strong. He says: "Passive resistance has no power to change man's heart...it is only what the weak offer because they are unable, not unwilling, to offer armed resistance." *Satyagraha* is based on three basic moral principles: truth, non-violence, and the law of suffering. The reference to truth and non-violence is clear. The law of suffering is the acceptance to suffer rather than make the other suffer. Self-suffering is the test of love. To suffer without any violence outward or inward one needs strength, courage and fearlessness. *Satyagraha* implies a whole interior moral attitude of the *Satyagrahi*: "*Satyagraha* is gentle, it never wounds, it must never be the result of anger or malice. It is never fussy, never impatient, and never vociferous. It

is breach of *Satyagraha* to wish ill to an opponent or to say a harsh word to him/her with the intention of harming him/her.”

Sarvodaya Society

The term *Sarvodaya* literally means the rise of all, i.e., a society in which the good of all is achieved. Gandhi writes about the India of his dream where the goal of *Sarvodaya* is achieved: “An India in which there shall be no high class and low class people, an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony; there can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or the use of intoxication, drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men.” From the writings of Gandhi five important aspects of *Sarvodaya* society can be identified. They are, *Rama Rajya* (Kingdom of God), *Sarva Dharma Samabava* (secularism), *Swaraj*, *Swadeshi* and *Panjayat raj*.

Poverty

The solution Gandhi proposed to the acute problem of poverty was ‘bread labour.’ “If every one of us bodily labours to earn his/her food, we would not see the poverty which we find today in the world.” He held the view that the poverty of the millions cannot be solved by big industries of the modern western type, which is based on industrial capitalism, rationalistic materialism and colonial imperialism. The introduction of machine into the production leads to the exploitation of masses by the small group of rich people through competition and marketing. Because of the demerits of heavy industries Gandhi encouraged small scale industries. About spinning wheel he wrote: “I would make spinning wheel the foundation on which to build a sound village life. I would make the wheel as the centre a round which all other activities will revolve.”

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is the Gandhian concept of non-violent state?

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2) What is the concept of *Satyagraha* according to Gandhi?

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3) Explain the Gandhian vision of *Sarvodaya*?

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2.7 TAGORE'S LIFE AND BASIC THOUGHT

Tagore was born on 7th August 1861, in Kolkata, Bengal. He belonged to an eminent and influential Bengali Brahmin family. He was born and brought up as an aristocrat and a lover of beauty. He became conscious of his higher mission of bringing human beings close to each other and to God. Tagore ranks with the greatest seers, sages and the devotees of India, who valued human being above everything else. Under the influence of the liberal tradition of his family and the philosophy of the Upanishads, he developed a positive view of life and love of humanity. He died on 7th August 1942.

Tagore had been deeply influenced by the thoughts of Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita. The medieval Indian religious and social philosophy also made an impact on his philosophical thinking. Though the metaphysics of Buddhism does not attract the poet much, the humanistic tradition of the Buddha and the Buddhist way of life appealed to him the most. In the spirit of the medieval saints and poets, he talked of the divinity of man\woman. Besides them, humanism of Vaisnavism, the mysticism of medieval saints, the philosophy of human being of the Baul sect of Bengal, humanism of Christianity and Buddhism helped him form his humanistic ideas and ideals. Apart from these, Brahmasamaj, the revival and reform of Bengali literature guided by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and the naturalistic and scientific movement also moulded his thinking.

2.8 SEARCH FOR THE ABSOLUTE AND NATURE OF THE WORLD

From his very early writings till his last poems Tagore's poems are marked by a quest for the Absolute. From the beginning itself he felt that there is a basic current of unity, a basic force of life and harmony behind the world. In the poems of *Gitanjali*, this basic force takes the form of a 'Thou.' This 'Thou' is presented as Supreme person who stands beside everyone, whose strength can transform his/her weakness into strength. Although this 'other' is the companion of one's life, he passes often unnoticed. Though man\woman fails to see him, yet he/she lives in a hope of a final encounter with this 'Other.' This final encounter will be a moment of ultimate bliss. One might look into the temples of organized religions to find this 'Thou'. But the God whom he/she longs for or seeks for is not there. It is in this sense Tagore says; "whom does thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thy eyes and see, thy God is not before thee. He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground..." (*Gitanjali* XI). Already in *Gitanjali* Tagore suggests that the lord is to be discovered in man\woman rather than in the confines of the organized religions. The Absolute which was first discovered as the force present

in nature, and then the force present in man\woman himself\herself is now declared as the “Supreme Man.” Tagore will now speak of the Humanity of our God or the divinity of man\woman.

Reality and God

Though in the metaphysical context the distinction between ‘God’ and ‘reality’ is still maintained, Tagore does not treat ‘reality’ and ‘God’ as two different entities. It is noticed that Tagore rarely uses the word ‘Absolute’ for the Absolute. The expressions that have been mostly used are: ‘The universal Man’, ‘The Supreme Person’, ‘The Supreme Spirit’, ‘The Infinite Personality’ etc. It can be said that his philosophy is peculiar and yet is a religious synthesis of Abstract Monism and a particular type of Theism. Reality, according to him is One. He identifies this reality with personal God. This identification of impersonal reality with personal God gives interesting results. And, therefore, Tagore can rightly be called ‘An Idealist’ or ‘A Spiritualist’; he can again be described both as a ‘Monist’ and a ‘Theist’. That is why many commentators on Tagore say so legitimately that Tagore’s philosophy oscillates between Sankara’s Vedanta and *Vaishnavism*.

Nature of the world

Tagore is of the opinion that the reality of creation has given a definite view on the nature of creation. Though his account of creation has a humanistic significance, it is, more or less, theistic. God, being the supreme reality, is the basis of the universe. Here, the creation is said to be the manifestation or the expression of the Absolute. According to Tagore, God finds Himself by creating. The reason for creation is joy. Using the Indian concept of ‘*Lila*’ Tagore says that creation is the ‘*Lila*’ of the creator. He creates in the fullness of joy- just to find Himself in the place of joy. Creation is separate from the Creator, and is yet united with Him.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What are the influences that moulded the philosophy of Tagore?

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2) How does Tagore explain his concept of God?

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3) What is the nature of the world that Tagore speaks about?

2.9 PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN PERSON

The philosophy of Tagore itself suggests the ultimate aim of human person, that is, the final destiny. It is the realization of unity, the realization of Divinity; it is comprehension, in an act of supreme love, nature and everything else; it is the realization of the Universal within. Tagore says, "The ultimate destiny is the realization of immortality, of complete freedom. The spiritual progress of human being is from bondage to freedom. The embodied state is a state of bondage. As we go on unfolding the powers and the freedom of the soul by rising above the bodily bondage and by trying to realize our essential affinity with all, we are progressing towards immortality-towards the realization of complete freedom." While accepting human person as a material, psychological, social and moral being at a time, Tagore lays more stress on the moral and spiritual aspect of human person's nature.

Nature of Human Person

According to Tagore, human person's real nature is that which he/she has not yet realized. The real glory of persons is hidden in him/her; it is not extrinsic but intrinsic. All his/her outward activities and achievements do not reveal his/her nature. He/she is never satisfied with his/her present state, with what he/she is, but he/she craves for what he/she ought to be. Tagore does not think human person to be imperfect, but incomplete, which is due to the fact that the real meaning of himself/herself is not yet realized in his/her present state. According to him human nature invites selfishness now and then and commits errors and crimes. This selfishness is human nature, which hinders the real view of our true nature. Tagore says, "Every individual is to be helped, wisely, reverently, towards his/her own natural fulfilment. Every human person shall be himself/herself, shall have every opportunity to come to his/her own intrinsic fullness of being. The final aim is not 'to know' but 'to be'." Sin and evil are nature of person's superficial self. According to Tagore, though man/woman had not actually revealed the infinity in his/her nature yet, in him/ her infinite is present potentially and therefore, he/she, by nature is not sinful, but good. Like other Vedic and great thinkers, Tagore thinks that with the removal of ignorance or *avidya*, the human person's real nature will be revealed. His/her real nature is covered by the external covering of '*aham*', which makes him/her limited to time and space.

The Self, Individuality and Universality of Human Person

Tagore emphasizes the reality and freedom of self. The self in us is divine. It is a part of God. The selves are the parts of the Divine, and they are, therefore, dependent on God. And therefore realize that 'self' which is divine in you. Human person is an individual, being and his/her individuality gives him/her unique identity among all creatures. Every individual is unique; in this plane he\ has no second to him/her. He strongly believed that no force can destroy this individuality of a person and no other being except God can enter into this world of person which he/she calls 'mine'. The field of the individuality is the field of his /her freedom.

Human person is not only individual, but also is universal. Human person has an idea of perfection. This idea of perfect being is present in every human being, and here he/she has universality within himself/herself. These ideas and values make human person one with all other persons. Thus this universality of human person raises him/her above other laws of nature. In this level, human being is universal; therefore there is no difference between one human person and other human persons. The differences of social, educational, economical and political conditions cannot differentiate the inherent unity of all human beings. Tagore says, "Human person's individuality is not the highest truth, there is that in him/her which is universal. If he/she were made to live in a world where his/her own self was the only factor to consider then that would be the worst prison imaginable to them, for a person's deepest joy is in growing greater and greater by more and more union with all."

Human Being as a Creator

As human being is free, his/her freedom is expressed in his/her creative act where he/she becomes a partner of the Supreme soul. His/her true nature is not revealed in his/her acts of necessities, but in the acts, which he/she does joyfully. Human being is not contented with the world given to him/her. Therefore, he/she creates his own world of creation. But that is only a pure work of art, which is created from human being's overflowing joy, and inner urges of creation.

Immortality of Human Being

Human being is great because he/she does not want to live in isolation, but wants to comprehend all. Again human being is great because God is expressed through his/her being. As a human being is God's expression, he/she cannot be limited by the narrow boundaries of his/her lower self. For Tagore, a human person is made in the image of the Divine artist, God Himself, and the Divine Artist is incomplete and unfulfilled unless He finds expression in the finite and human person imitates the Divine Artist. This is his/her religious response which gives him/her immortality in Divine creator. He/she is immortal in that aspect where he/she is 'true' transcending her/his small partial 'Ego.' In his/her inner being he/she actualizes the desire of all, gives form to joy of all. But if he/she goes to the opposite direction, he/she falls from the truth of humanity. Therefore, Tagore wants to live in the plane where Human being is immortal, where he/she dwells in the universal. Tagore reminds human beings that they are 'children of immortality'. Their immortality consists in their greatness. Tagore compares a person's greatness with the morning sun whose horizon is far away from us. A person's greatness consists in this that he/she knows that he/she is not yet born and he/she is yet to realize his/her true nature.

2.10 TAGORE'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHTS

The Religion of Rabindranath was the poet's religion. It was neither an orthodox religion of piety nor a mystic religion of a theologian. The religious consciousness and the poetic talent were so interrelated that he was unable to isolate the divine element from his poetic works. This is very well expressed in the insight meaning of his poetical work '*Gitanjali*'; his religious life has followed the same mysterious line of growth as his poetical life. The spiritual freedom or the liberation of the soul or '*Mukti*' formed one of the cardinal truths of Religion. Each man\woman is conscious of the transcendental truth in him\her, which is made known to him\her through his\her inner fulfilment. The Religion of Tagore preaches fearlessness of the finite as it has implicit faith in the deathlessness of the real of 'Whole man'. The philosophy of self-surrender and the integration of the individual being with the cosmic being are as old as the *Upanishadic* teaching i.e., '*Tatvam-Asi*'. All these are possible when a human being learns the real significance of selfless life and detachment.

2.11 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Tagore's 'Social Philosophy' cannot be separated from his 'Humanism'. His social philosophy is an outcome of his humanism. In his social thinking humanistic viewpoint is expressed. His social thinking can be divided mainly into two broad divisions. One is the aspect of knowledge or analysis; another is the aspect of solving the problems or practical side. And he himself takes active part in removing and solving the problems of social injustice. Economic and political problems are also for him parts of our social life. Tagore never believes in the existence of any other world. When every individual of the earth unfolds all his/her potentialities and blooms in his/her fullest and complete form, and when all human beings co-exist in love and companionship with each other, heaven will come down to this earth. His social philosophy aims at progress of life in all its aspects. He was fully aware of all evils of India in those days – ignorance, poverty, social injustice, political subjection, slavery and bondage labour. Therefore in his philosophy, he wisely highlights the equality of human beings in full real freedom as individual human beings.

For Tagore, merely 'no-war' is not identical with peace, because according to him 'no-war' forms only negative aspect of peace. What matters to him is the positive aspect of peace, i.e. to realize spiritual harmony of human beings. Peace, according to him cannot be mere negative of war, but it should mean mutual understanding and sympathy among the people of the same nation, other nations and the universe at large. Therefore, real peace cannot be achieved by any instrument of policy but through the spirit of love. He has travelled all over the world preaching the ideal of universal peace. He believes that each race should be allowed to develop itself and at the same time a sense of unity should be developed in people, so that keeping their identities, the different races and nations can meet and unite with each other for the national and universal peace.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1) What is the nature of a human being according to Tagore?

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2) Explain Human being as 'Individual', 'Universal', 'Creator' and 'Immortal'?

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3) What does Tagore speak of religion?

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4) Explain the social philosophy of Tagore.

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5) How does Tagore look at the concept of peace?

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2.12 LET US SUM UP

Gandhi's system is a synthetic unity of different sciences. Humanism is the dominant principle in Gandhian philosophy. Gandhi speaks of two models to speak of God, namely, a theistic model and an *Advaitic* type of absolutism. He beautifully couples God with truth; he identifies God as truth and truth as God. The universe is considered as the expression of the absolute. Gandhi also finds the spiritual elements in the human being which acts as the basis of his/her dignity. Non-violent state characterized by economical equality can be considered as the essence of his political philosophy. In summary, his system is an exalted one in so far as he gives to mankind a complete set of social, economic, political, ethical and religious principles to govern the individual and humanity.

Tagore has an anthropomorphic conception of God. The infinite has been conceived as the supreme human personality. God is the creator of finite selves and nature. Though theism has the dominant theme in Tagore's philosophy, the impersonal and indeterminate nature of the absolute also finds place. The creation is considered as the '*Lila*' of the creator God. In other words God finds himself in creation. While speaking about human person, he places more emphasis on the spiritual and moral aspect of human being. One of the notable factors of Tagore's philosophy is that he sometimes makes his position confusing. The inconsistency in his thinking is justified by the fact that he is, basically, a mystic and poet.

2.13 KEY WORDS

Ethical naturalism, which identifies the rightness or goodness of actions with their tendency to promote happiness, thereby reduces moral facts to natural ones.

Lila: A concept in Indian philosophy that explains the universe as a cosmic puppet theatre or playground for the gods. "*Lila*" literally means "play," but in religious texts it refers to "divine play" - life as a spontaneous game played by light hearted forces beyond our understanding.

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UNIT 3 AUROBINDO AND S. RADHAKRISHNAN

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- 3.14 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.15 Key Words
- 3.16 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

One of the important aims of this unit is to introduce some of the prominent philosophical thoughts of two prominent Indian philosophers, namely, Aurobindo and S. Radhakrishnan to the students. It will provide a general picture of their understanding on the Absolute or God, nature, human being etc. It also helps students have a glance at certain concepts which are peculiar and unique to each philosopher.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Aurobindo is considered as the greatest mystic of the modern age. The robust intellectualism, the powerful expression of philosophical thoughts, and the mystic vision are uniquely blended in his writings. Radhakrishnan's salient features comprise universal outlook, synthesis of the East and the West in religion and philosophy, the spiritualism and humanism, and openness to the

influences of science, art and values. The values, culture, tradition, religions and philosophies of different countries are in synthesis in Radhakrishnan's philosophy. His philosophy does not aim at merely a constructive synthesis, but at a creative assimilation of mystic perception and experience.

3.2 LIFE AND THE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Aurobindo (Arvind Ghose) (1872-1950), yogi, nationalist, poet, critic, thinker, spiritual leader of India, was born at Konanagar, West Bengal on the fifteenth of August 1872 as the third son of Krishna Dhan Ghose and Swaranalata Devi. Aurobindo Ghose was educated in England from the age of seven to the age of twenty-one. In 1906 Aurobindo joined the political movement of Indian resistance to British colonial rule and became a prominent voice of the nationalist party. In 1908 he was arrested. In 1910, Aurobindo shifted to French India (Pondicherry) where he developed his great religious and philosophical vision of reality. He spent the next forty years of his life in Pondicherry formulating his vision of spiritual evolution and integral yoga, and refusing to pursue direct involvement in political events. He died in Pondicherry in 1950. Some of his main works include; *The Future Evolution of Man*, *The Hour of God*, *The Life Divine*, *The Lights on Yoga*, *Savitri, a Legend and a Symbol*, *Foundation of Indian Culture*, *More Lights on Yoga*, *The Riddle of the World*. *The ideal of Human Unity*, *Bases of yoga*, *The Supernatural Manifestation on Earth etc.*

At an early age of his life itself he was exposed to the world of western philosophy. He was also well-acquainted with great philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. His study of ancient Indian philosophy, especially, the Advaita Vedanta and yoga, made a great impact on him. However, it is right to say that he relied mainly upon his own vision, contemplation and reason. He believed that religion is a *Sanatana Dharma*, eternal and universal. It cannot be confined to one religious tradition or one set of texts. Its only infallible scripture is to be found in the heart of man/woman. However, this eternal religion is remarkably well expressed in the spiritual tradition of India and so India has a God-given mission to be the guardian, exemplar and missionary of this religion. Aurobindo goes back to early Vedas and discovers there, expressed in symbolic ways, the basic spiritual teachings of *Sanatana dharma*. While surface level meaning speaks of myths and rituals, the symbolical way of understanding the spiritual experience reaches the deeper secret meaning. The purpose of Aurobindo's philosophy was to bring out this meaning.

3.3 THE TRANSCENDENT REALITY IN AUROBINDO'S THOUGHT

Aurobindo conceives reality as supremely spiritual. The ultimate reality for Sri Aurobindo is the triune principle of *Sacidananda*. The ultimate Reality is Transcendent. This Transcendent Reality expresses itself in the cosmos. The ultimate Reality is linked up with the cosmos by the triple formula of Supermind that "Brahman is in all things; all things are in Brahman; and all things are Brahman".

In the thoughts of Sri Aurobindo, the supreme reality is eternal, absolute and infinite. Since it is absolute and infinite, it is in its essence indeterminable. The pure Absolute is indefinable, infinite, timeless, and spaceless. It cannot be summed up in any quantity or quantities; it cannot be composed of any quality or combination of qualities. The Absolute is beyond stability and movement as it is beyond unity and multiplicity. The Absolute is independent of all relatives, but it is also the basis of all relatives. It governs, pervades, and constitutes all relatives. Though it is indescribable and unknowable, it is self evident to itself.

Sacidananda

The highest positive expression of the Reality to our consciousness is *Sacidananda*. *Sacidananda* is the one with a triple aspect. For us, the highest positive expression of Brahman is the *Sacidananda* or Existence - consciousness - bliss, all in all. In other words, in the Supreme the three are not three but one; existence is consciousness, consciousness is bliss and they are not distinct at all. It manifests itself as indeterminate as well as determinate, as *nirguna* as well as *saguna*, as one as well as many, as being as well as becoming and yet it transcends them all. The existence (*sat*) of Brahman is that which appears to us as *Atman*, *Ishwara* and *Purusha*. The consciousness (*chit*) of Brahman which is always a force (*shakti*) manifests itself as *maya*, *shakti* and *prakriti*. The Bliss (*anand*) of Brahman underlies all these manifestations and it is out of sheer bliss that Divine manifests himself as this world. These three aspects and these powers embrace all reality and when taken as a whole, reconcile all apparent contradictions.

Supermind Principle

In the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, the ultimate Reality becomes the world by the principle of Supermind. It is present there in everything of the world as consciousness and controller. Supermind is creative principal. It has been variously described by him. It is Real idea, it is truth consciousness, the seer will, the Creative Idea, the Creator, the God and so on. The mind is divided into three parts – Thinking mind, dynamic mind, externalizing mind, - the former is concerned with ideas and knowledge in their own ways, the second with putting out of mental forces for realization of the idea, and the third with the expression of there. For Aurobindo, the overmind is a link between the higher and lower Hemispheres. The overmind is a sort of delegation from the Supermind, which supports the present evolutionary universe in which we live here in matter.

By the Supermind what we mean is the full Truth - consciousness of the Divine Nature in which there can be no place for the principle of division and ignorance; it is always a full light and knowledge superior to all mental substance or mental movements. We call it the Supermind or the truth – consciousness, because it is a principle superior to mentality and exists, acts and proceeds in the fundamental truth and unity of things and not like the mind in their appearances and phenomenal divisions.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) How does Aurobindo explain the Absolute reality as *Sachidananda*?

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2) Explain the Supermind Principle of Aurobindo?

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3.4 NATURE OF CREATION: THE WORLD-PROCESS

Sri Aurobindo conceives creation as a double-process. It is a process of descent and ascent or involution and evolution. First of all, it is a descent of the spirit into the worldly forms and then it also implies an ascent of the worldly forms to its original higher status. Aurobindo describes creation as the plunge of the spirit into ignorance. Ignorance, according to Aurobindo, is not a separate power, but it is a part and parcel of Divine consciousness itself. In involution the spirit is descended into the matter.

The movement of ascent, that is evolution, follows the same pattern as the process of descent but in a reversed order, starting from matter and reaching the Supermind and thereby sharing in the life of the absolute. Evolution presupposes involution. In other words, evolution is possible only because involution has already taken place. Matter can evolve into life only because life itself has involved into it. The lower cannot evolve into the higher unless the higher is already in it. So therefore, he conceives evolution as a reverse process of involution. This process of ascent has a triple character: (a) Widening: simple forms of matter take an increasingly complex character so as to admit the concentration of a complex and subtle form of consciousness. (b) Ascent: from lower to higher grade of being. (c) Integration: as soon as the evolution reaches a higher grade, it takes up all the lower grades and transforms them according to its own principles and laws. It can be expressed in the following manner.

Absolute being *Sat-Cit-Anand*: to Supermind

INVOLUTION: Overmind ...Intuition...Illumined mind... Higher mind...mind... Life... Matter.

EVOLUTION: Matter...Life...Mind...Higher mind...Illumined mind...Intuition... Overmind.

3.5 MAN IN TERMS OF EVOLUTION

According to Aurobindo, so far evolution has passed from the state of complete inconscience to the grade of mental which is well represented in man\woman. So in man\woman lies the possibility of the next step of evaluation- the transition to the supra-mental level. Aurobindo believes that the man\woman who is evident to our senses is not the real man\woman- at least he\she is not the complete man\woman. In the process of evolution the appearances of

man\woman does not correspond with the appearance of mind. With the animals the mind has already appeared. But with the coming of human intellect we have new dimension of the mind. Now, apart from the knowledge of appearance we have self-consciousness too. Following the general principle of evolution man\woman takes with him\her the inferior levels of matter and life to a higher level. There is no opposition between matter, life and mind but an integration of the three in a higher synthesis. Man\woman and all the lower levels of reality reach the divine manhood or 'super manhood.' This can be realized only through a long process of evolution. This process cannot be limited to one life span. This evolution is fully possible only if we accept the general principle of rebirth.

3.6 REALITY AND ITS ASPECTS

The soul is a spark of the Divine. It is the representative of the central being. It supports all individual existence in nature. The Psychic being is a conscious form of that soul growing in the evolution, in the persistent process that develops first life in matter, mind in life, until finally mind can develop into overmind and overmind into the supramental Truth. The soul supports the nature in its evolution through these grades, but is itself not any of these things. The psychic being is, according to Aurobindo, the original conscience of man\woman. It is the concealed witness, hidden guide, inner light, and inner voice of the mystic. Sri Aurobindo uses the word consciousness in the following senses: Conscious Being or spirit; *Purusha* or *Chaitanya*, Awareness of knowledge; *Chit*, *Chetana* or *Jnana*, Consciousness force or conscious energy; *Chit- Shakti*, Power of awareness of self and things; *Chetana*, The faculty of becoming aware of anything; *Chitta*, *Manas Chetana*. Consciousness is a fundamental thing, the fundamental thing is existence. Not only the microcosm but also the macrocosm is nothing but consciousness arranging itself.

Being and Becoming as Real

Sri Aurobindo definitely tries to solve the problem of Being and Becoming in the most original manner. He tells that both Being and Becoming are real. He takes both the facts of Being and Becoming with equal importance. The word 'Being' is not used by Sri Aurobindo always strictly in the sense of Atman or the original and fundamental reality except in a few places like the Divine Being, the Supreme Being etc... In other places he has used it in the sense of existence or that which exists or is conceived of existing, life, etc... as the word is generally used in the English language. The Absolute manifests itself in two terms, Being and Becoming. The Being is the fundamental reality; it is a dynamic power and result, an effectual reality, a creative energy and working out of the Being, a constantly persistent yet mutable form, process, and outcome of its immutable formless essence. What is original and eternal for ever in the Divine is the being; what is developed in consciousness, conditions, forces, forms etc... by the Divine power is Becoming. The eternal Divine is the Being; the universe in time and all that is apparent in it is Becoming.

3.7 SYNTHESIS OF YOGA

Attainment of supramental status is not the ultimate destiny of human being. The superman also has to work for the transformation of others. So, one has to lead a divine life - a perfected life on earth - a life not of limited consciousness but a life of inner completeness and perfection of being. Aurobindo believes that this divine life can be realized with the help of yoga. Describing the nature of yoga, he says, "yoga means union with the divine, a union either transcendental or cosmic or individual or as in our yoga, all three together." Yoga helps all the aspects of evolution: widening, heightening and integration and therefore it is integral. The triple yoga of knowledge, devotion, and action leads to the transformation of man's\woman's mind, emotion and will. Aurobindo classified the various yoga according to the way they have inserted themselves in human life. Here we have a more complete list of yoga: (a) at the lower level we have the '*Hata yoga*', which is concerned with the bodily transformation. (b) A little higher we have '*Raja yoga*' which is concerned with the transformation of the mental level. (c) Finally, we have the yoga of triple transformation with its three branches of *jnana*, *bhakti* and *karma*, which lead finally to the yoga of self-perfection.

3.8 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

We find in his early writings a radical approach to politics. We see that nationalism appears as a sort of religion for him in the early period of his life. According to him the individual is a value that cannot be subordinated to society. The individual has a key role to play since it is through him/her that the supramental is to manifest itself in the world. Although Aurobindo uses organic analogies to speak of society he always sees that the individual in society is more than a cell in the body. He does not oppose individual and society. Both are manifestation of the divine reality. There is a relationship of reciprocity between these two and both tend towards the same goal.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) How does Aurobindo explain his theory of involution and evolution?

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2) Where does Aurobindo situate man in the process of evolution?

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3) Explain Aurobindo's understanding of 'yoga'.

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4) Explain the social and political philosophy of Aurobindo.

3.9 RADHAKRISHNAN'S LIFE AND WORKS

He was born on 5th September, 1888 at Tiruttani, a small village, forty miles northeast of Madras. He was the second child to his parents. From 1900 to 1904, he studied in Voorhees College, Vellore. Later he moved to Madras and studied in Madras Christian College. He rendered his service as a teacher in philosophy in Madras Presidency College and in the University of Mysore. He was Vice President from 1952 to 1962 that is for two consecutive terms. Later he became the President of the Indian Union securing 97.98% vote for the term of five years. His main works include: *East And West*, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, *East and West in Religion*, *The Reign of Religion In The Contemporary Philosophy*, *Religion and Society*, *The Recovery of Faith*, *Indian Philosophy*, *An Idealist View of Life*, *The Hindu View of Life* etc.

Radhakrishnan had deep study of the classical literature. He studied the Indian philosophy in depth, which had influenced him very much. The study of Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita, Commentaries on Brahman Sutra by Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhava, Nimbaraka, and others, The Dialogue of Buddha and The Buddhist and Jain Scriptures broadened his thought. Western philosophers such as Plato, Pontinus, Kant, Bradley, Bergson and Whitehead also influenced him in his writings. Amongst the contemporary thinkers of India, Gandhi and Tagore were his friends and they had definite influence on him. Radhakrishnan is a mystic philosopher. His religious thought serves as the data to his philosophy. Though he had widely read the ancient, medieval and modern philosophies, still for the real source of his writing he relies on his personal spiritual experiences.

Nature of his philosophy

His basic philosophical position is of a kind of a synthesis of Advaita Vedanta and the philosophy of Absolute Idealism. Like Vedanta he believes that the reality is one, like Absolute Idealism, he shows that everything is a necessary aspect of the One. So, it can broadly be described as a philosophy of monistic idealism. Since Radhakrishnan conceives reality as spiritual, he is an idealist. He realized the need for a re-awakening of the soul and a recovery of the spiritual life. Thus his philosophical thinking seems to be an attempt to illustrate that the ultimate nature of the universe is spiritual. Because of his tremendous emphasis on spirituality, he appears to be a mystic too.

3.10 THE ABSOLUTE OR THE BRAHMAN

Radhakrishnan conceives the nature of the absolute as monistic. In other words, the absolute in itself is essentially one. He has come to realize that the world expresses a unity within its process. This is the reason why he emphasises the monistic character of the absolute. The absolute is conceived by Radhakrishnan as 'Pure Consciousness', 'Pure Freedom', and Infinite Possibility.' According to Radhakrishnan, the Absolute has to be spiritual. It is conceived as a free spirit. It is free in such a way that there is nothing to limit it. Its freedom is uninterrupted. The absolute is also infinite. It is self-grounded and is the foundation of everything else. Since it is infinite it is changeless. It is also self-existent and complete-in-itself. It is also eternal in the sense of being timeless. Radhakrishnan calls the Absolute 'the whole of perfection'. Because of these reasons he asserts that the Absolute is beyond all kinds of expression.

Absolute and God

Radhakrishnan distinguishes between the Absolute and God. He feels that in order to explain the universe it is necessary to think of a principle that would account for the order and purpose of the universe. He also feels that there has to be a principle, a God- a non-temporal and actual being- by which the indeterminateness of creativity can be transmitted into a determinate principle. So it implies that the Divine Intelligence- the creative power- has to be conceived as the intermediary between the Absolute Being and the cosmic process. It is here that the principle of God appears in the philosophy of Radhakrishnan. The supreme has been conceived as revealing itself in two ways; Absolute and Ishwara. God is the Absolute in action; it is God, the creator. The real in relation to itself is the Absolute and the real in relation to the creation is God. He believes that the Absolute is the object of metaphysical aspiration and God is of religious aspiration.

Reconciliation between Sankara and Ramanuja

Radhakrishnan reconciles the views of Sankara and Ramanuja by maintaining that the Brahman of Sankara is Absolute and that of Ramanuja is God. God is a person, but the Absolute is not. God is an object of the intellect, but the Absolute is known through intuition. The Absolute is pre-cosmic God and God is the projected power of the Absolute. Intuition is higher than intellect and it overcomes the dualism of subject and object. Our thought is limited, and when it tries to grasp the Supra rational Absolute, it imposes its own limitations on the former. Thus, God is the Absolute pressed into the moulds of thought, which can't do away with the distinction between the self and the other; but this distinction is overcome by intuition, which is Supra-rational.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is the main philosophical stand point of Radhakrishnan?

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2) What are the factors that shaped the philosophy of Radhakrishnan?

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3) How does Radhakrishnan make a distinction between the Absolute and God?

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3.11 THE NATURE OF THE WORLD AND CREATION

Since he considers God as the creative principle of the world, he presents a spiritualistic account of creation and the world. The universe is conceived as expressing an aspect of the Divine plan. The world is created by God. The world has a beginning and an end. God is not separate from it. God is said to be the past, the present and the future of the world; and yet he is quite different from the world. This distinction is between the creator and the created. Creation is the actualization of one of the inherent possibilities of the Absolute. Radhakrishnan explains that the Spirit enters into the spirit of the non-spirit to realize one of the infinite possibilities that exist potentially in the spirit. He also speaks of the accidental nature of the world where he affirms that the creation is a free act of God. In other words, creation is not a necessary act for the creator. He also says that though the universe is an accident, it is real so far as it is the Absolute's accident.

3.12 HUMAN BEING AND THE NATURE OF SOUL

In explaining the nature of soul, Radhakrishnan seems to be a realistic. He accepts the ultimate spiritual nature of the soul and at the same time, he asserts the reality and value of the biological life also. He affirms that human being cannot be fully known through the science alone. There is still something in man\woman which is beyond intellect and senses. So, according to Radhakrishnan, there are two aspects of human being. They are known as finite and infinite aspects of man\woman. Radhakrishnan used the word 'soul' in a very wider sense; so much as even those bodily activities which have tendency towards self-transcendence are called as soul-activities. Human being, unlike other beings, has a peculiar ability to reflect and to plan. He\she can go beyond himself\herself. Radhakrishnan calls it as 'self-transcendence.' For him it is one of the important aspects of the soul. Radhakrishnan defines the finite aspects of man\woman as those aspects that are determined by the empirical or environmental conditions. He calls this aspect of man\woman differently- 'the empirical man', 'the physical man', 'the natural man', 'the bodily man' etc. He also speaks of the infinite nature of human being. Beyond his\her external conditioning, there lies a capacity of self-transcendence. It is different and higher than the empirical. Radhakrishnan calls it as 'the spirit' in man /woman. In other words, the infinite aspect of man\woman consists in his\her spirituality.

Karma

Everything in the universe is an effect of its past and is the cause of its future changes at the same time. It embodies the energy of the past as well as causes changes in the future. Karma is not so much a principle of reward and punishment but as one of continuity. Karma has two aspects, retrospective and prospective, continuity with the past as well as creative freedom of the self. The karmas bind us with the past by giving structure to our self and thereby determining it to that extent, yet man\woman is free in his\her actions and acquires fresh potencies. Radhakrishnan says that we are both determined and free. Our actions are determined by our past Karmas. In whatever we do we are determined by the character of our self. The dynamic organisation of the tendencies of self is evidently a matter of our past karmas. But still we are free in our actions and have wide scope for fresh activity. Radhakrishnan removes the prevailing misconceptions by asserting that the theory of Karma is not one based on reward and punishment and it is also wrong to think that moral and virtuous Karmas lead to success and evil to failure.

Freedom and Self Determination

Free will is action done by self-determination. When an individual performs an action of his\her own choice, the act done is a self-determined one. Radhakrishnan here explains the meaning of the word self-determination. A self is an organised whole, it represents a form of relatedness. Self-determination means action done by the whole of the self's nature. Only that action is free or self-determined in which "the individual employs his\her whole nature, searches the different possibilities and selects one which commends itself to his\her whole self."

Human Being as Relatively Free

There is no complete freedom in human being's action; it is only God who is absolutely free. When the self becomes co-extensive with one's whole being only then the self becomes absolutely free. Human being is only relatively free; it is a matter only of degrees. When an action is done by the whole self, we are most free. But our actions are least free when done by sheer habit or convention.

A human action is motivated with some ends or purposes. All his\her activities are regulated towards some purposes, and, therefore, our actions are determined by some external goals or ends in view. But our actions are also governed by our past. If men\women were free from their past deeds, there remains no moral responsibility on them. Therefore, no action is absolutely free either in the human or in the external world. There is the continuity of the past in the present and the present conditions the future.

Radhakrishnan is against the view of pre-destination, in which God is the sovereign who works without law or principle. For him life is a gracious gift of God, who expresses his sovereignty through law. He says, "Such a view of divine sovereignty is unethical. God's love is manifested in and through law."

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) How does Radhakrishnan look at the concept of nature?

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2) What is the approach of Radhakrishnan to human person?

3) What is the understanding of Karma according to Radhakrishnan?

Importance of Rebirth

Dr. Radhakrishnan speaks of rebirth in a concrete sense. According to him rebirths are essential for the realisation of the distant goal – salvation. It cannot be realised in a single life. As the span of life is short and realisation of union with God is a far-off goal, pursuit in the series of rebirths is essential. Radhakrishnan conceives that rebirths are essential for the realisation of the different possibilities existing in us.

Salvation

Radhakrishnan believes in the simultaneous salvation of all and not individual salvation. As God is the creator of the world, so long as the world lasts, God must continue as God without becoming one with Absolute. But the individual (*jiv* who is a creature of God must remain with God till the latter enters the Absolute. The world cannot disappear if there is a single soul without salvation. So individual salvation can only be incomplete salvation.

The self is the most integrated and highest product. The more a human being pursues his/ her ideals, the more integrated and organised he/she becomes. The highest degree of unity in an individual self is attained when life is identified with one supreme purpose. The supreme purpose of human being is to become God. The cosmos is working towards that end; it is rushing for the union with God. It is by meditation and ethical life that an individual breaks off his/her narrow individualism and unites with the spiritual universalism. When all selves obtain communion and oneness with God, when all become prophets and seers, the world realises its destiny. The final salvation of an individual is dependent on the cosmic salvation. At the ultimate end all the selves unite with the Absolute. There is achieved then the freedom from rebirth, cessation of worldly existence and eternal oneness with *Saccidananda*. The final salvation is attained when the selves lose their individuality and get united with the all-pervading Absolute. The selves merge in the Brahman and they lose their identity, existence, name and form.

3.13 HIS RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

Man\woman looks for meaning and direction in life. Reason alone cannot give meaning to him\her. Man\woman has a natural tendency to transcend/go beyond the phenomenal world.

There is an innate impulse for perfection. He also speaks of universal religion, where all religions come together and contribute towards each other's growth. Authentic religion is "the wisdom of love that redeems suffering man". Religion is not a set of dogmas, beliefs, rituals, rites, creeds etc., but it must lead to Inner Realization. It is not institutionalized.

He dreamed of a secular India/India as secular nation. Secularism can't reject religion. Secularism is an attitude of respect for all religious faith or anything, which human beings hold as sacred. It is based on the sanctity of individuals. The essence of democracy is consideration for others, respecting each one as sacred and encouraging the rich variety and diversity. The aim of democracy is 'just society'.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) How does Radhakrishnan explain his concept of cosmic salvation?

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2) What is the political philosophy of Radhakrishnan?

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3.14 LET US SUM UP

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is the basic philosophy of the twentieth century, Indian philosophy. His philosophy is a mighty synthesis of the oriental and the occidental, the ancient and modern thoughts, which can break up into many channels of thought. He presents the ultimate reality as spiritual. Presentation of God as '*Sachidananda*' is peculiar to Aurobindo. In his thought matter is spirit. The integral theory of evolution put forth by Sri. Aurobindo is one of the best theories of evolution. The higher, spiritual and divine principles of consciousness get unfolded in evolution process. Sri Aurobindo is the first seer who points out to us the nature of the spiritual principle of consciousness. He also propounds earthly immortality. But his individual salvation is inseparably related with the cosmic yoga. Sri Aurobindo envisages spiritual humanism too. So in this sense, his philosophy contributes much to the philosophical literature.

Radhakrishnan's philosophy can be termed as monistic idealism. One of his main concerns was to give a spiritual outlook to everything. He also makes a distinction between the Absolute and God. The world is considered as the creative work of God. But at the same time both God and the world are different. The credit goes to Radhakrishnan for providing a holistic understanding

of human person. He affirms the spiritual nature of human soul but at the same time gives due respect to the value of the biological aspect of human person. He provides a very reasonable and practical explanation of the theory of karma by removing the traditional misconception regarding it. While speaking about the self-determination, he assumes that the human being is relatively free. His explanation on the cosmic salvation explains that cosmic salvation is possible when all identify themselves with the Absolute losing each one's identity. Though many consider him as an interpreter, the greatness of Radhakrishnan lies on the fact that he presented his philosophical conviction systematically and with an academic precision.

3.15 KEY WORDS

Mysticism: The word mysticism has been derived from the Greek word *mystikos*. It is the pursuit of communion with, identity with, or conscious awareness of an ultimate reality, divinity, spiritual truth, or God through direct experience, intuition, instinct or insight.

Karma; The universal causal law by which good or bad actions determine the future modes of an individual's existence. Karma represents the ethical dimension of the process of rebirth.

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UNIT 4 B.R AMBEDKAR AND RAIMUNDO PANIKKAR

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- 4.2 Ambedkar's Life and Works
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- 4.14 Key Words
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4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this unit is to provide a bird's eyeview on the basic philosophical understanding of B.R Ambedkar & Raimundo Panikkar. The first part (Ambedkar) will mainly focus on Ambedkar's main thoughts which were born out of his social thinking. The second part introduces Raimundo Panikkar's main concepts and understanding which have its foundation on his inter-religious and inter-cultural thoughts.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, popularly known as Baba Saheb Ambedkar, was one of the most learned among the political and social leaders of the 20th century in India. He wrote many books and edited many papers. He wrote not only on the problems of the Dalits, but also on economics, politics, religion, minorities, education, labour, stratification of society etc.

Raimondo Panikkar, a reputed thinker, has been an inspiring presence in the field of multi-faith and multi-cultural dialogue for over half a century. He occupies a unique place in the history of both Indian and world history of philosophy and theology by way of coupling Indian thoughts with the western.

4.2 AMBEDKAR'S LIFE AND WORKS

Ambedkar, the glory of India and pride of Dalits was born on April 14, 1891 in a low caste family of suppressed *Mahar* community of Mhow in Madhya Pradesh. After his graduation, he received scholarship from the king of Baroda for higher studies in USA and England. He graduated in law and took a doctorate in economics. On account of ill treatment meted out to him being an untouchable, he left the service and returned to Bombay to practice law. On 14th October 1935, he declared that he would not die in Hinduism. He served the country as the chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. Ambedkar is regarded as the modern Manu and deserves to be called the father or the chief architect of the Constitution of India. On August 15, 1947, he was made the minister of law in the Central Cabinet and he resigned that post in 1951 due to the difference of opinion on the bill on Hindu code. He embraced neo-Buddhism with his three lakh followers on October 14, 1956 just before his death on December 6, 1956. His works include: *Slavery and Untouchability; Which is Worse?; Annihilation of Caste; A Reply to Mahatma Gandhi; What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to Untouchables?; Who Were Shudras?; The Buddha and his Dhamma; Annihilation of Caste.*

4.3 INFLUENCE AND BACKGROUND TO HIS THOUGHTS

Ambedkar was born in a community of those who have been unjustly treated as the despised people of the Indian soil. Right from his childhood, he suffered terribly the social evils of caste discrimination and its holocaust called untouchability. He was a voracious reader and owned one of the largest personal libraries. He had a vast reading on Karl Marx, Bertrand Russel, Harold Lasky, Leo Tolstoy and George Bernard Shaw. In a way Ambedkar continued the same tradition of liberal thought found in the writings of social reformers like Rande. Ambedker's social theory was influenced by the British liberal tradition too. Buddhist teaching also made a great impact on the philosophy of Ambedkar.

Ambedkar's purpose was practical rather than speculative and his philosophy of life was essentially a development and evolution under the condition of an inhuman social order and a wrongly idealized social relationship in India that treated the human existence of Dalits as subhuman. For him social reform has to come before the political reform. He criticizes violently the caste system. He feels that the caste system as it stands cannot be the basis of society. He believes that the caste system should be rejected as basically unjust; it is a social system which embodies the arrogance and selfishness of a perverse section of the Hindus who were superior enough in social status to set in fashion and who have authority to force it on their inferiors. Caste does not result in economic efficiencies. Caste cannot and has not improved the race. The whole life-ambition of Ambedkar was to regain social equality to the former untouchables among whom he was born.

4.4 AMBEDKAR'S SOCIAL THOUGHT

The ideal to be realized is of one man\woman, one value in all walks of life, political, economic, and social. This ideal of one value is to be achieved by stopping religious, social and economic exploitation of man\woman by man\woman. Absence of exploitation in any form is the essence of socialism. Socialism does not only embrace economic equality, but also social and political equality. The foremost hindrance to socialism in India is the caste system in Hinduism and its byproduct untouchability which denied almost all the human rights to the untouchables. Following are the characteristics of Ambedkar's state socialism: Condemnation of existing social, political and economic order as unjust order, An advocacy of a new order based on the principle of one man (woman), one value, one vote, A belief that this ideal is realizable through socialism and parliamentary democracy and constitutional means, A revolutionary way of establishing social democracy to carry out the programme of social solidarity.

He had expressed his desire in the parliament to establish a social democracy, which would satisfy the economic, social, educational and cultural needs of the people. In his concluding speech in the constituent assembly on November 25, 1949 he declared: social democracy means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principle of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items of a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one form from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. The basic concept of Ambedkar's political thought is the equality of all men\women, which is to be achieved by a state socialism of a constitutional and parliamentary democracy.

Origin of Caste and Untouchability

The concept of the origin of caste and untouchability according to Ambedkar is to a large extent different from that of the Vedic and the non-Vedic theories of caste. Ambedkar holds that caste as a closed system has its genesis in the practice of superimposition of endogamy over exogamy. The practice of untouchability for Ambedkar has its origin in the phase of conflict between the settled and nomadic tribes and those who were defeated in the war were forced to be the 'broken men'. The broken men (women), in the course of history due to the onslaught of Vedic Brahmanism, were turned into untouchables (Dalits).

Annihilation of Caste System

Annihilation of casteism is one of the most essential elements in Ambedkar's socio-philosophical frame. It cannot be done just by abolishing the sub-sects, nor by inter caste dining. Ambedkar proposes a solution on two levels: (a) the proximate, immediate means to remove caste is intermarriage. (b) But the fundamental remedy consists in bringing about a social reform before political reforms and in denying the faith in *shastras*, where he says; "you must not only discard the *shastras*, you must deny their authority. You must have the courage to tell the Hindus what is more wrong with their religion." According to him the Hindu is the sick man\woman of the

society who makes other people also sick. His protest against Hinduism was expressed by burning *Manusmriti* in a public meeting.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What are the primary assumptions of the philosophical thinking of Ambedkar?

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2) What is the social teaching of Ambedkar?

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3) What is the origin of caste and untouchability according to Ambedkar?

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4) How is the annihilation of caste possible according to Ambedkar?

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4.5 AMBEDKAR'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

His political thinking seems to revolve around the following two convictions: (a) Rights are protected not by laws, but by the social and moral conscience of the society. (b) A democratic form of government presupposes a democratic form of society. Indian constitution remains indebted to Ambedkar for his significant contribution to the peaceful living in the land of diversity. For Ambedkar, state is to provide security against internal disorder and external aggression. The state stands for the welfare of its members. It is the people who make the state and hence the state is to serve the needs of the people. It is a means to achieve the common good of the society. Between state and society, Ambedkar would prefer society as the primary and state as secondary. State, according to Ambedkar, is not of a divine origination but of human origination. To him, the state is a human organization with its objective being the protection of the rights of the individuals. One of his major convictions evident in his political philosophy can

be stated as. The state was not an end in itself, but only means for the furtherance of human ends in the interests of a better future of the society. He greatly emphasized the role of the law of the state in the growth of the individual. To him, law was an important factor in maintaining social peace and justice among different groups of people. Thus, he concludes that all are equal before the law. He upheld right as the basis for the human development and the nation at large.

Ambedkar advocated “One state one language formula”, because he thought it would be a solvent to radical and cultural conflicts. He also advised his country fellows that if they were willing to remain united and integrated as a whole and want to develop common harmonious culture, they should put all the efforts to adopt one language – Hindi, as a common language. The division of the states on the basis of language has created blocks in realizing the Indianness. It has given vent to the upsurge of regionalism that has attenuated the integrity of India. People have confined themselves within the walls of the state. Therefore it is very difficult to accept others as brothers and sisters.

Idea of Freedom

Ambedkar’s idea of freedom is very different from Gandhi and Nehru. The main concern of these two national heroes was more of political freedom. But Ambedkar’s main focus was political freedom with social freedom. For him political freedom was meaningless without the social and economic freedom. His life was a hope for the hapless people who were exploited unjustly.

Meaning of Democracy

According to Ambedkar, democracy is not merely a form of government, it is primarily a form of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. For him the essence of democracy is the equal share in the existence of human rights. He realized the incapability of Western pattern of Democracy and he gave a new meaning to the term Democracy. For him democracy means the absence of slavery, caste, and coercion. The roots of Democracy are to be searched in social relationship, in terms of the associated life among people.

4.6 CONCEPT OF HUMAN PERSON

He develops his concept of human being in relation to his understanding of social order. According to him, a good social order must recognize the individual in the society. By recognizing the individual, a good social order collectively recognizes the good of the community. In the absence of the individual, the notion of society or collectivity ceases to exist. Therefore, the primary role of a good society is that it should treat ‘man (woman) as an individual’ first. He\she needs to be respected in the society for the reason that he\she is a human person. He further holds that human existence is not to be treated solely in the physical sense alone, but it has to be respected in the sense of something higher that a human has spiritual super-existence through knowledge and love. For Ambedkar respect of the individual devoid of any caste- class stratification is sacred.

For him the human society is to be built on the foundation of freedom or liberty, equality and fraternity. These values are based on the notion that the individual human person is not a means but an end himself. While the concept of liberty emphasizes the inviolability of the human

person, the concept of equality insists that the right of the individual is to be treated as an equal and to be respected as complete member of the society irrespective of his/her attainments. Similarly, fraternity, according to Ambedkar, is the disposition of an individual to treat men/women in reverence and love and dignity and the desire to be in unity with other fellow beings. Fraternity gives strength for the individual to commit for the welfare of all. Ambedkar further points out that the tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity are interlinked to each other and they are rooted in the idea of upholding the totality of the human person as complete individual in the society.

4.7 HIS ATTITUDE TO RELIGION

His attitude towards religion was not spiritual like that of Gandhi. His approach was intellectual and socio-political. Ambedkar holds that religion is a part of one's social life or inheritance; one's life and dignity and pride are bound up with it. He believes in the social force of religion; and that force lies in religion being a unified system of beliefs and practices. According to him, religion is an influence or force suffused through the life of each individual molding his/her character, determining his/her action and reactions, his/her likes and dislikes in the society.

Religion for Ambedkar should respond to the problem of human society and promote human community living. In this sense, Ambedkar recognizes the Marxist frame that religion is a social phenomenon. However he differs from the Marxist orientation that religion is the opium of people. Rather he strongly upholds that the religion is natural and necessary for human community living. In agreement with the Marxian frame, Ambedkar conceives a false religion as an ideology that could be used as a tool to oppress the Dalits. It is here that Ambedkar makes a critical approach to Hinduism. According to him, in the name of god the religion, *Varnashrama Dharma* and untouchability were advocated in India. It was contended that the given unjust social structure was God-given and hence cannot be changed. Due to this Ambedkar developed utmost anger towards Hinduism and Hindu gods and even god-based religions like Islam and Christianity were not acceptable to him. Perhaps, because of this factor, he could not take a final decision or conversion until 1956. Buddhism, finally he accepted, was not primarily god-oriented, but was thoroughly Indian. He looked at religion from cultural dimension. He was on the assumption that if the depressed classes join Islam or Christianity they not only go out of Hindu religion, but they also go out of Hindu culture. Conversion to Islam or Christianity would denationalize the depressed classes. He separated religion from culture and held Hindu religion responsible for slavery, the practice of untouchability and exploitation of the depressed classes. Ambedkar was of the opinion that the social ideals of Buddhism are the best way to be adopted to promote peaceful social living because the Buddha's method is based on love, persuasion and moral teaching.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

- 1) How does Ambedkar develop his political philosophy?

2) How does Ambedkar look at human person?

3) What is the approach of Ambedkar to religion?

4.8 LIFE AND WORKS OF RAIMUNDO PANIKKAR

Born on 3 November 1918 in Barcelona to the parents who came from diverse backgrounds, Raimon Panikkar became a reputed figure in the field of theology, philosophy and social thinking. His father was an Indian Hindu and his mother was a Catalan Catholic. Panikkar was ordained a Catholic priest in 1946. Later, he undertook studies in Indian philosophy and religion. For the next fifty years Panikkar pursued his academic career as a professor in European, Indian and North American universities. Some of his works include; *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, *The Trinity and Religious Experience*, *Worship and Secular Man*, *The Vedic Experience*, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, *The Intra-religious Dialogue* and *The Cosmotheandric Experience*.

Basic Stand Point

Raimondo Panikkar still remains as reputed figure in the field of inter-religious dialogue. So his primary concern is that of culture, religion and the relationship between the two. Religion, philosophy and culture are three "elements" of the human reality. If the first could be compared to the feet with which Man journeys towards his destiny, philosophy could represent the eyes that scrutinize that journey, and culture, the earth on which human being is walking during his/her concrete pilgrimage. An intercultural approach shows that one cannot separate Philosophy from Religion, and that both are dependent on the culture which nurtures them.

4.9 PHILOSOPHY, CULTURE AND INTERCULTURALITY

Philosophy could be understood as the activity by which human being participates consciously and in a more or less critical manner, in the discovery of reality and orients himself/herself within the latter. The concept has thus become the unique instrument of philosophy. Each culture offers to philosophy the language that is essential for the philosophy to formulate its insights. But it is the philosophy that tries to question the very foundations on which each culture is based. Philosophy is authentic, revolutionary, protesting and transforming. In other words, each philosophy emerges from the womb of a culture, and simultaneously by questioning what holds that culture together, can transform it. In fact, every deep cultural change has emerged from philosophical activity. It is philosophers who influence most of the destinies of history.

Interculturality

Interculturality is the philosophical imperative of our times. Monoculturalism is lethal and multiculturalism is impossible. Interculturality recognizes both assertions and seeks a middle way. Interculturality is inherent to the human being and a unique culture is as incomprehensible and impossible as a single universal language and as one man alone. Interculturality is a possibility situated between two (or more) cultures. We cannot claim to define through one single word what intercultural philosophy is, nor even presuppose that such a philosophy exists. Each culture is a galaxy which secretes its self-understanding, and with it, the criteria of truth, goodness, and beauty of all human actions. There are no cultural universals. But there are, for sure, human invariants. But the way according to which each one of the human invariants is lived and experienced in each culture is distinct and distinctive in each case. Cultural respect requires that we respect those ways of life that we disapprove, or even those that we consider as pernicious.

4.10 MULTI-FAITH DIALOGUE AND DIALOGICAL DIALOGUE

For Panikkar, multi-faith dialogue is both a highly political and highly urgent activity directed towards creating new forms of human consciousness and corresponding new forms of religiousness. It involves the crossing-over of traditions in a manner that does not abandon one's primal tradition, but deepens and extends it. Something new is created at the level of human and religious consciousness. Panikkar's primary principle for religious encounter is that it must be a truly religious experience. According to him, it is more an exchange of religious experiences than of doctrines. The dialogue route is existential, intimate and concrete. Its purpose is not to establish some universal religion. For the philosopher, it is in order that human relations remain personal. One cannot have human contact with a computer; a machine is not a person. Genuine dialogue between religions, therefore, ought to be this dialogue: between you and me, between you and your neighbour; it should be like a rainbow where we are never sure where one colour begins and another ends. It must be free from particular and general apologetics.

Those involved in interfaith dialogue should not see their task in terms of defending religion in general against the non-religious or anti-religious attitudes of secular society. Religious encounter is a meeting of persons, not simply the meeting of minds. It is not only a theological symposium but a religious encounter in faith, hope and love.

Dialogical Dialogue

Dialogical dialogue begins with the assumption that the other is also an original source of human understanding and that, at some level, persons who enter the dialogue have a capacity to communicate their unique experiences and understandings to each other. There are certain indispensable prerequisites for dialogical dialogue. These include a deep human honesty, intellectual openness and a willingness to forego prejudice in the search for truth while maintaining "profound loyalty towards one's own tradition." Second, one needs a deep commitment and desire to understand another tradition. Both partners are encouraged to "cross over" to the other tradition and then "cross back again" to their own. One learns to think and understand on the basis of the symbol systems of more than one tradition. Symbols are both bounded and open. Their interpretation is never exhausted. And yet they are concrete, always tied to a particular worldview.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) In what way, according to Panikkar, philosophy and culture are related to each other?

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2) How does Panikkar explain the concept of interculturality?

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3) Explain the process of inter-religious dialogue according to Panikkar?

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4.11 THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF THE DIVINE, HUMAN AND NATURE

The individual who is separate from the others, or from the earth or the divine, does not exist. We belong both to earth and to the divine by our very nature. We are conscious and free parts of a whole, but not as puppets that can be easily directed by threads, but rather we find ourselves within a cosmic interweaving or network. The human being is a person, not an individual. I understand a person as 'a knot in a net' of relationships. These threads connect us with our fellow men, the earth and divinity. The more conscious the person is, the more he/she realizes that his/her person reaches out to the confines of the world. That is the enlightened man/woman.

Cosmotheandric Vision

Panikkar develops his cosmotheandric vision of reality with reference to three major religious traditions: the Christian Trinity; the Vedanta Hindu *Advaita*; the Buddhist *pratityasamutpada*. He believes that the threefold pattern-traditionally *Theos-anthropos-cosmos*- are invariants of all religions and cultures. He describes the cosmotheandric principle as an intuition of the threefold structure of all reality, the triadic oneness existing on all levels of consciousness and reality. In Christian terms, ultimate reality, the Trinity, is one but also three; in Hindu terms the ultimate unity of all things is literally neither one (*advait*) nor two (*advitya*); in Buddhist terms everything is radically related to everything else (*pratityasamutpada*).

The cosmotheandric principle could be stated by saying that the divine, the human and the earthly are the three irreducible dimensions which constitute the real. Everything that exists, any real being, presents this triune constitution expressed in three dimensions. Panikkar's formulation of reality as *cosmotheandric* challenges the assumption that reality is reducible to Being; there is also Non-Being, the abyss, silence and mystery. We cannot identify even the consciousness with reality because there is also matter and spirit. Panikkar conceives that reality is not mind alone, or *cit*, or consciousness, or spirit. Reality is also *sat* and *ananda*, also matter and freedom, joy and being. In fact, this is for Panikkar the fundamental religious experience; Being or reality transcends thinking. Panikkar's cosmotheandric vision reveals three assumptions regarding the reality. Firstly, reality is ultimately harmonious. Secondly, reality is radically relational and interdependent in such a way that every reality is constitutively connected to all other realities. Thirdly, reality is symbolic. We do not have a God separate from the world, a world that is purely material, nor humans that are reducible to their own thought-processes or cultural expressions.

Concept of *Theos*

The divine dimension of reality is not an 'object' of human knowledge, but the depth-dimension to everything that is. Panikkar does not want to confine the divine mystery into mere God-talk. He identifies divine mystery using non-theistic terms as infinitude, freedom and nothingness. The mystery of the divine is the mystery of the inherent inexhaustibility of all things, at once infinitely transcendent, utterly immanent, totally irreducible, and absolutely ineffable.

Concept of *Anthropos*

Consciousness is the human dimension of reality which is not reducible to humanity: Consciousness permeates every being. Everything that is, is consciousness. In other words, consciousness relates not only to humans who know but to everything else that is actually or potentially known. From the other perspective, if consciousness relates to everything, the human person can be never reduced to consciousness. Panikkar presents human experience as a threefold reality: aesthetic, intellectual and mystical. He critiques technocratic culture for reducing human life to two levels, namely, the sensible and the rational, forgetting the mystical aspect.

Panikkar's intention is to show that genuine human experience involves the harmony of senses, intellect and mystical awareness in correlation with matter, thought and freedom. Thought and mystical awareness are not possible without matter, indeed, without the body. All our thoughts, words, states of consciousness and the like are also material, or have a material basis.

Concept of *Cosmos*

The world of matter, energy, space and time is our home. These realities are ultimate and irreducible. There is no thought, prayer or action that is not radically cosmic in its foundations, expressions and effects. The earth is sacred. For example, he insists that there is something more than pure materiality in a simple stone. Through its existence in space and time, the stone is connected to the entire universe with which it shares its destiny. In Panikkar's terms, there are no disembodied souls or disincarnated gods, just as there is no matter, no energy, no spatio-temporal world without divine and conscious dimensions. Every concrete reality is cosmotheandric- a symbol of the 'whole'. It is not only God who reveals; the earth has its own revelations. Matter, space, time and energy are then co-extensive with both human consciousness and the divine mystery.

Concept of Human Being

He places human person in the context of culture as his main concern was that of interculturalism. For him Man\Woman is a cultural animal. He also believes that culture is not extrinsic to him\her, but natural. He further explains that human is a being that is naturally cultural – or culturally natural. Culture is the field that makes it possible for us to cultivate the world that it itself presents to us, so that man\woman may become fully human and achieve his fullness. Culture is the specific form of human nature. The nature of man\woman is cultural. Culture is neither artificial nor additive to man\woman. The ultimate criterion for condemning another culture will therefore consist in showing that it is anti-natural.

Concept of Truth

According to Panikkar, truth does not allow itself to be conceptualized. It is never purely objective, absolute. To talk about absolute truth is really a contradiction in terms. The pretension of the great religions to possess all truth can only be understood in a limited and contingent context. Not to be conscious of our myths leads to integralism. But in order to be aware of our myths, we need our neighbour, and therefore dialogue and love. The truth is first of all a reality that permits us to live, an existential truth that makes us free. He says that he is not such a relativist as to believe that the truth is cut up in slices like a cake. But, he expresses his conviction that everyone participates in the truth. And the value of dialogue between the various religions is precisely to help me perceive that there are other windows, other perspectives. Therefore I need the other in order to know and verify my own perspective of the truth. Truth is a genuine and authentic participation in the dynamism of reality. He makes it clear that the dialogue between religions is not a strategy for making one truth triumphant, but a process of looking for it and deepening it along with others.

4.12 HIS UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGION

Religion is the path that leads one to the state of fulfillment or salvation. Salvation, understood here in its broadest sense, is anything making one whole, healthy, free, and complete. It could also be understood by different people as heaven, nirvana, nothingness, just society, etc. Thus, a religion is that set of practice and/or doctrines which one believes will lead one to the liberation or fulfillment of one's being. These practices and doctrines are spatially, temporally and culturally conditioned. Within each religion one can distinguish three aspects: (1) the socio-historical expressions in and through which a religion is alive, (2) the sacramental or sacred structures that mediate a relationship to the transcendent and (3) the transcendent divine reality, the mystery, the goal of all religions. At the socio-historical level religions are equivalent to each other; at the sacramental level they complement and supplement each other; and the level of the mystery, which is neither one nor many, and which is called by many names and is experienced in many ways, religions bear witness to the infinite richness of the mystery and the impossibility of any one religion to exhaust it. For him religions are like the different colours of a rainbow, there are several colours and no colour has a monopoly over the others.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) Explain the cosmotheandric vision of R. Panikkar?

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2) Where does Panikkar place human being in his understanding?

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3) What is the concept of truth according to Panikkar?

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4) How does Panikkar look at religion?

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4.13 LET US SUM UP

The underlying feature of the philosophical approach of Ambedkar is its praxis-orientedness. His philosophical thinking, in other way, has something to do with concrete life situations as his thinking was derived from the dreadful practice of casteism and untouchability. The basis of his socio-political philosophy is the establishment of a just society which is free from any kind of exploitation. Even his approach to religion was born out of his social thinking. Though he criticizes religion, namely, Hinduism for perpetuating the prevailing poor social status of the backward communities, he also admits the indispensable nature of religion in fostering social living.

Focus on Panikkar's experience of Christian-Hindu, Christian-Buddhist and Christian-Secularist dialogue. It will outline his "rules of the game" for interreligious dialogue and intercultural encounter. Attention will be drawn to his distinct levels of religious discourse identified as *mythos*, *logos* and symbol. Panikkar's more adventurous proposal for the meeting of the world's religious and cultural traditions will be introduced through elucidation of his "cosmotheandric vision" of reality—what he now calls "the radical trinity" of cosmic matter, human consciousness and divine freedom. The conversation will conclude with an overall assessment of Panikkar's contribution to contemporary thinking on multi-faith dialogue and religious pluralism.

4.14 KEY WORDS

Annihilation of Caste: Ambedkar's social project of rejection of Brahmanical hegemony in social order

Cosmotheandric Vision: interconnectedness of realities of the Divine, human and the world

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