

Value-Awareness and the *Puruṣārtha* Scheme

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It is not that only 'now we are crying of value degeneration in individual and social life all over the global society'. It is ever there in any age or in any society. Of course, that does not invigorate the case for valuelessness. For a healthy living of individual in the social set up, a balanced and composite value-awareness is necessary. That goes without saying. Value-awareness does not operate simply by prescribing a set of norms in the syllabi and putting those in the educational curriculum for teaching. Such a procedure is likely to be degenerated into some sort of indoctrination. That would cause a sense of boredom and it may turn out to be repulsive.

There is no necessity to presume that there are certain set of values (either Indian or Western) which are perennial and eternal. No value is absolute and inviolable in the sense, it has to be followed and practiced in all situations, come what may. Such a conception of value is neither theoretically sound nor practically efficacious. This, again, does not imply that exceptional deviation completely rubs out the meaning and significance of value in the socio-moral context. A radical form of moral relativism is as vulnerable as moral absolutism. If absolutism gives rise to a stagnant, static and closed rendering, relativism on the other hand, accelerates moral bankruptcy and nihilism.

Value-education, like any other subject of enquiry, should therefore be dynamic, flexible and liberal. It should keep itself in tune with the changing situation and environment. It is obviously on the foundation of value-awareness but not on value-indoctrination. A point, in this regard, is to be noted. It is not that all that the saints/seers teach or preach are morally sacrosanct and are workable in the present context. Nor even, it is to be conceded that all they advocate are of no value at all.

A balanced and critical look to the past is essential and that is what is expected from a philosopher (*darśana-jñā* as a *samīkṣyaka*). He need not reduce himself to be either a blind *stāvaka* (praiser) or a blind *ninduka* (abuser) because both the attitudes are the expressions of some form of ill-balanced emotions. A free rational probe, with open-minded liberality seems to be a prerequisite of the philosophic reflection (*dārśanic cintana*) and that is more evident in case of value-enquiry.

So far as value-education is concerned, it is primarily aimed at focusing such topics and subjects which are of socio-individual concern at the background of national interest and resurgence. This is, no doubt, an easy task, but nevertheless possible. It is the general responsibility of all intellectuals like scientists, social scientists, and other social activists to proportionately contribute their share on this important issue. A philosopher does not, however, directly deal with issues concerning politics, economics, science and other allied disciplines; value-education is also not the singular concern of a philosopher. The educationists and the policy-makers at the national level have their legitimate say in the matter. A philosopher, being an intellectual and a responsible citizen of the country/nation, cannot ignore the issue and it is naturally expected that he has to contribute his role for the growth and sustenance of value-awareness. He is expected to move for a rigorous, serious and critical analysis of different value-concepts (especially at the moral and ethical framework) in the socio-empiric setting. It is because of the fact that value-awareness is socio-individual necessity. It is for the well being of the individual remaining within society and not away from that. The concept of value, when critically investigated and analysed, cannot bypass this vital point. Any sort of trans-social and trans-human speculations should always be kept to the minimum. One should note that values are after all primarily of human concern in a socio-empiric framework.

As far as possible, the transcendental, visionary, speculative and impractical norms and standard need not be insisted upon in the educational programme or curriculum. Most of those are based upon some confused and obscurant ideas which have led to certain sterile conceptions that are found to be at least morally very much dubious. It does not seem to have any socio-empiric relevance, unless there is radical re-look or revision of the norms and standards in a refreshing manner.

For instance, *mukti* has been held as the highest value (*parama śreya*) in the Vedāntic tradition and it is treated as the ultimate spiritual realisation in the disembodied state of pure existence. Some Vedāntins, by admitting *videhamukti* alone, clearly opt for disembodied state of release. Even those Vedāntins who admit *jīvanroukti*, also maintain that it is a state, attained during lifetime because the life continues for certain time with body due to inertia of motion (for instance, the motion of potter's wheel). But the ultimate state of *mukti* is nothing but pure disembodied state of Brahman/Ātman realisation. If this is the meaning and implication of the Vedāntic concept of *mukti*, then it is obviously individualistic and personalistic in the esoteric sense of the term and thus has no socio-moral significance.

Again, it is held that the *jīvanmukta* is beyond *pāpa* (evil/vice) and *puṇya* (virtue). The moral rules and regulations do not apply to him. He transcends socio-moral framework. There is the living instance of Jaina *digambara* spiritual saints/seers who never bother of being naked in the public place. This is permissible in their religious doctrinal set up. Now, whatever may be the spiritual excellence of that state and, even without raising any question about their integrity and honesty, can it not be pointed out, with all fairness, that this sort of behavioural conduct of publicly being stark naked has an adverse effect on the mental make up of normal man in the social plane? Does it not affect the moral fabric of social system in a definite sense? A personal religious belief or taboo, to whatever extent it is spiritually elevating, should not be entertained at least on the ground of social ethics. It does affect the living man in society. In the name of higher sense of spiritual value, this should not form part of value education. How can that which is viewed as trans-social in the empiric setting must be valuationally ideal in moral and ethical sense? Morality is not subservient to spiritual transcendence. If religion carries the sense of transcendental spiritual excellence and morality is defined in terms of that spiritual foundation, then, it seems, such an account of morality does not become obligatory or mandatory in the socio-empiric framework.

It is suggested in certain quarters, that value-education in the Indian context, is to restore the teachings of saints/seers of the past. But, it is also observed that quite often some such teachings and preachings are not only mutually incongruent but are also found to be rather morally controversial. It is, however, not the case either that all such sayings are to be discarded in the modern context. One has to

critically analyse and scrutinise each of those expressions in their respective context, and at the same length, it is expected to read them at the background modern or contemporary perspective. I suppose the moral ethical implications that are well noticed in the traditional sources can be carefully sorted out and, if those contain some definite insights for today, (and I think, there are), then those should be seriously considered to be incorporated into the topics of value-education. But a sweeping remark, either in the affirmative or in the negative, is only self-deceptive. Despite all that we vociferously speak about our glorious spiritualised past, advocacy of so many noble thoughts and norms of code and conduct (*vicāra* and *ācāra*), so far as the present state-of-affairs in the country is concerned is most dismal. India is rated today as one of the most corrupt nations of the world. One cannot reasonably set aside the issue by saying that the causal factor is entirely beyond the cultural legacy of the past. If there is something that binds socio-individual freedom and progress, then there should not be any inhibition to spell it out and to make a move for constructive change and reform. It is no good to expect milk from the cow which is dead and gone. Is not our advocacy of morality and spirituality virtually turns out to be sheer hypocrisy and self-deception?

It is remarked that while *kula dharma*, *jāti dharma*, *varṇa dharma* are applicable to a particular situation or station in life of an individual and such dharmas have the scope for change and modification. In certain critical situation (*āpad dharma*), there is the admittance of *sādhāraṇa/sāmānya dharma* which at times have been identified as *sanātana dharma* (both in Hindu and Buddha dharmic sources) and such dharma, represented by such features like *satya*, *ahimsā*, *asteya* etc., is considered as universal and perennial, irrespective of caste, creed or community and race. It seems, that *dharma*, in this sense, resembles the principle of universality in morals. It is then quite compatible with socio-empirical needs and expectations. It does not have any necessary linkage with trans-social and trans-moral spiritual ideal. *Dharma*, in this sense is quite plausible and workable in the field of practical ethical domain and there is no need for religio-spiritual foundation. Value-awareness is not same as spiritual awareness having any theological root. Some have made a move to suggest that spiritual outlook need not, in all cases, be dumped into some form of obscurant theological religionism and, in that way, need not be viewed as fully trans-social and non-secular. It is then linked with social concern. Spiritualism then is viewed as not

something necessarily opposed to mundane or *laukika*. In this connection, supportive references are cited from the *Śāstric* sources like *loka sangrahalloka kalyāṇa/bahujana sukhāya/bahujara hitāya* etc. Such a shift from theological transcendence to socio-empiric betterment is, of course, laudable. Theoretically, at least, it sounds perfectly all right. But, as a matter of fact, the move seems to be in different direction. The major thrust of emphasis continues on the propagation of the specific form of trans-mundane religio-spiritual beliefs, dogmas, rituals and allied institutional practices and customs. Socio-individual upliftment in a human plane totally ignoring religious sect/cult/community, being always kept to the secondary status in different religious functioning and operation, perhaps, is to have an eye-wash of camouflage. However, exceptions are notably there in every religious order like Buddha, Luther, Vivekananda, Mother Teresa and so on who have boldly come out of religio-theological narrowness to serve the cause of human welfare at the mundane plane. It is notable that in all such cases, human welfare is given priority over transcendental spiritual beatitude. But from the established religious institutionalised sources, the emphasis on socio-human welfare in preference to the observance of rites and rituals of the specific type are not found to be that conspicuous.

National resurgence is another issue. For the all-round development of nation (in all fronts), value-awareness at the background is, it goes without saying, very much required. Without norm and discipline in any walk of life (say economics, commercial trading, political relationship, and scientific technology), progress is not possible. The value-awareness can be properly inculcated at the socio-individual background keeping in tune with all environmental and ecological necessities. In order to have a normal sense of peaceful living, due regard for pursuance of norms and discipline is required. And, that can be well accomplished in the social setting with due attention of keeping ecological balance as far as practicable. While implementing these objectives, both value-awareness and national resurgence can be thought as operational, quite close to each other. On account of having certain personal preferential attitude, someone may develop some sort of leaning towards spiritualism or materialism. At the outset those need not be opposed or critically dealt with as long as those do not tamper the socio-moral foundation. But, that also does not imply that those are to be embraced as a matter of absolute necessity. One is to be clear on the point that socio-individual morality is not necessarily related with either spiritual or material

metaphysical foundation. To think in terms of a metaphysical holism, I think, is not a logical must, even while comprehending the valuational framework.

Value-awareness with the tacit approval of national growth can be pursued without having any such pre-conceived metaphysical holistic attitude. Morality is a socio-empiric necessity and its practical operation can very easily be undertaken without any such trans-empirical speculation. We need to live well with good cordial relation in the socio-empiric set up in a proper judicious plane, without having any pre-conceived visionary thinking of the transcendent. The transcendental coating of value-education is not necessary; rather it obscures the free flow programming of the sense of morality in the socio-ethical plane.

So far as culture is concerned, there need not be any static notion. It is also flexible and changeable. The notions and ideas belonging to a specific cultural pattern are suitably modified and restructured as per situational and contextual requirements. Value-neutrality does neither mean value-opacity nor value-callosity. It only suggests one to be properly judicious having due regard to moral reasoning in an objective plane as far as it is practicable. And, that regard for moral and valuational criteria can be executed within the social fabric of empirical dimension. The ultimacy of value is determined on the basis of contextuality and not in terms of visionary sense of eternity. The philosopher is expected to remain firm on the measuring rod of rational justice neither to be tilted to any form of spiritualism nor to materialism. In fact, he should keep himself free from any such trap of 'ism'.

In the *sanātana* Hindu framework, there has been the advocacy of *puruṣārtha* as an ideal model to be worked out and followed in social living of man, not necessarily linked with the *varṇāśrama dharma* of the conservative Hindu society. It is rather conceived and is operative without being restricted to any sect or creed. A person, belonging to any class or community, can adopt the three/four-fold *vargar* and can thereby sustain himself in a composite and balanced set up within his socio-empiric sojourn and may develop also a view of life which is least harmful to others and he may himself personally attain peace and tranquility.

The classification of human value in terms of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* is identified as basic. If necessity arises, then there can be multiplication of values which again, if possible and desirable, may be brought under the above mentioned three broad headings. Nothing

is necessarily suggested that these three *vargas* are final and fixed for all time to come. But, one thing seems to be certain that these three identified values are concerning individual in society, not being restricted to any particular community or cultural set up. Surely these three values, as found in the traditional sources, do not have any religious coating, being confined to a particular theological order. To identify *kāma* as a value, *artha* as a value, and *dharma* as a value, it can be seen definitely relevant in the socio-empiric framework. For a proper adoption and operation of the three values in man's life is not that impractical and unworkable move. So also it is never morally pernicious.

A proper, balanced and disciplined ordering of all the three values in human life has been recommended and in the social dimension its workability seems to be quite plausible and feasible without being attached to any religious or theological foundation. The adoption of the three values in the broad sense is not thus antithetic to value-awareness. It is found to be least incompatible with the demands and expectations of value-awareness and also of national resurgence.

Difficulty, however, crops up once the other value, that is, *mokṣa* has been added to the list. It has been introduced and advocated by some of the Hindu protagonists at a later stage. *Mokṣa* is traditionally identified as a spiritual value and, in that way; it is set as something different from three values, mentioned before. While others are of socio-individual relevance in the empiric plane, *mokṣa* has been usually presented as trans-social, trans-empirical and spiritual, and, that again, it belongs to a particular religio-philosophical order, i.e. Vedānta. It is treated, in certain circle, as the highest value (*parama puruṣārtha*); for it gives rise to the realisation of the final beatitude and it is this spiritual attainment, once attained, is held to be final.

Whatever may be the allurements for such highest value to a Vedantic saint or a keen follower of that viewpoint in his personal attitudinal make up; it can never be of socio-empiric concern and cannot be included in the framework of value-education. *Mokṣa*, as presented by its votaries, seems to be of individual concern and does not necessarily contribute to social cause. And, in this manner, it does not fit within the framework of value-education. It does neither serve the purpose in the social set up, nor does it become conducive for national resurgence. Having overdose of *nivṛtti*, as against *pravṛtti*, it is far removed from the *laukika* plane. That is why for a *niṣkāmi*, *sannyāsa* (complete renunciation) has been prescribed. It is, in this sense, rather a social.

Hence, the conception of *puruṣārtha* as *trivarga* (threefold scheme) can be considered fruitfully as a subject under value-education format and such threefold scheme can be elucidated in a broader set up to meet the challenges concerning value in the modern perspective.

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