

Paths to Realisation

The World has witnessed many attempts to see, understand and interpret Reality. These attempts have proceeded from several levels of knowing, and understanding and interpreting it, since reality is not only multi-faced but also multi-levelled; it is not known through the senses alone but is also understood by reason, and interpreted by conduct and activity and intuition. It is no wonder therefore, that there have been, and are, many ways of knowing, understanding and interpreting it, each of which is ambitious enough to attempt a total comprehension of that Reality. It is undoubtedly true that the more modest of these seekers after truth are content to confine knowledge to the limits of their day-to-day activity, whatever these limits might be. Therefore, some seek to know only about solids and metals, and some others know only about liquids and so on. Thus there have developed many sciences - bits of knowledge limited to the spheres of interest, activity and utility. Such knowledge, requisite for proper adjustment to the environment, is valuable for life, and within its limits, absolute. Biological sciences alongside physical sciences, social sciences alongside political sciences, have been existing from the dawn of speculative interests - perhaps even prior to the latter.

In one sense philosophical knowledge might be said to attempt a comprehensive single theory to embrace both. Philosophy thus demands a type of mind different from the scientific, in so far as its interest is to know, understand and interpret the whole range of human experience, sometimes exceeding it. Thus whilst scientific knowledge is aimed at by most people for better adaptation and adjustment to the world around their immediate vicinity, and not the knowledge of the whole of Reality, Philosophy aims at this latter alone. A scientific mind is different from the philosophic mind. Despite the utility of science towards philosophical comprehension, the philosophical approach seeks to apprehend Reality as a whole, and as it is in itself. True to definition, philosophy is the love of knowledge (Sophia) which is experience of Reality by an attempt to live for it, in it and by it. It is what Spinoza called as living and moving and having one's being in God or Reality in its All-ness. This is undoubtedly a great aim.

There are many approaches - realism for example. Realism means to know, understand and interpret the world of Nature as a plural world comprising parts - infinitely divided and capable of being analysed (taken apart into pieces). It sees differences infecting and characterising all reality, sensory as well as rational analyses, and seeks to synthesise the plurality of elements and apprehend the principle of their unity.

There is the approach of idealism which postulates that all reality is mental or mind-dependent, if not mind-made. This may hold that all reality is a unity or One, but it can as well hold that it is a unity in multiplicity or a multiplicity in unity, both being mental. It may also hold that the multiplicity is derived from the One, or that the multiplicity is the appearance, real or illusory, of the one spirit or the Absolute. Idealisms range from romantic idealism to abstractionistic rationalism. In any case philosophers who uphold the reality of mind or Reason have invariably been idealistic.

There is another approach called the Mystical, which concludes that Reality is trans-rational and could only be grasped by transcendental intuition which is superior to the feeling of aesthetic individualism. Mysticism has, of course, infinite protean forms, but the main philosophical trend of mysticism lies in its intuitive grasp of reality as a whole, both in its single Oneness and in its infinite manyness in the One. It is trans-rational in the sense that the logic of mystic experience is not capable of being fitted into the neat dialectic schema of reason. Therefore, it appears at one end to be irrational and at the other end to be trans-rational, carrying a supreme conviction or axiomatic reality or truth in its deliverances.

From sense o reason and from reason to intuition seems to be the levels of our passage to Reality.

Each of these approaches yields a Vision or Pattern and shape of Reality. Thus darsanas are framed. Indian thought presents the Reality in the three-fold way of Perception-dependent formulation of Reality (including super sensory perception), Reason-dependent formulation of Reality (as dualism), and Intuition-dependent formulation of Reality (as one in many, One is duality, One in its transcendent Oneness). They are Vaisesika, Samkhya, and Vedanta, each with its relative darsana, such as Nyaya, Yoga and Mimamsa.

The so-called heterodox systems depend on intuitive sources other than the Veda, but they are also capable of being classed under the broad triple heads, Realism (pluralism), Rationalism (dualism) and Intuitionism (integralism). Buddhism leads towards transcendental intuitionism; Jainism leans towards synthetic intuitionism; realising the relativism of the plural standpoints, whereas the tantras have always sought to bridge the gulfs between intuitions of several layers and levels of reality by the supreme activity of integration (carya) and doing (kriya).

The problem of man has been the conquest of misery; attainments of liberation, perfection, positive bliss and immortality have of course been other aims which have mingled with the first. The whole Darsana has to provide means to the attainment of goals of man (Parama purusarthas).

The question would be whether a new darsana is at all needed, since the other Darsanas are there to satisfy man's needs. It is clear that teachers of the Vedanta have all along taught that the four purusarthas of man have been satisfactorily gained through the pursuit of the Vedamarga. The paths of karma and jnana taught by them are said to help the attainment of both happiness here and in the hereafter. Beatitude is also had by following the path of the Veda and its upangas (subsidiaries).

The darsanas that have sprung out of the Vedas may be said to be the six systems - nyaya, vaisesika, samkhya, yoga and the two mimamsas. Though each one of them claims to be a whole exposition or system yet we can discern the emphasis made in respect of the world of Nature in the first two darsanas, the psychology of human being in the next two, whilst the last two darsanas deal with the transcendental reality that sustains, through works and through knowledge, the realities of nature and soul. Therefore the three modes of approach are clearly discernible - the adhi-bhautika, the adhyatmika and the adhi-daivika, and one is expected to study all the six systems (darsanas) in order to arrive at the Vedanta - the conclusive purport of the Veda. Other sciences have all helped to elucidate the Vedic Vision. Similarly the Puranas and the Itihasas have helped to explain and expatiate on the teachings of the Vedic Vision.

The Buddhistic approach, in a way, seems to have only emphasised the need to seek the spiritual attainment of the Vedic rsis or the Brahmanas. The goal was only the parama-purusartha, liberation or moksa, rather than an understanding of Reality as such, not even of oneself, except in so far as one is a creature of misery and bondage. Similarly the Jaina approach, while recognizing the multiple nature of Reality, emphasised the psychological need to dissipate or dissolve the karma-matter, or throw it out of oneself, in order to become a free one. They did not aim at the metaphysical knowledge of Reality - their concern was more practical, in the one direction of attainment of liberation or moksa.

The Vedic Vision embraced all reality, and while recognizing the supreme validity and emphasis of moksa over other things, it also discerned that Reality has to be known in all its aspects, integrally, in its transcendent nature as well as in its immanent nature and form. Real freedom would entail the recognition of both the worlds or spheres of being as the field of freedom. To have attained a partial, though by no means primary, Vision of the Beyond, is in itself a great excellence. However, the necessity to attain that Beyond which can explain and sustain the here and all is no less an imperative of consciousness.

Therefore, no new darsana other than the Vedic Vision seems to be called for. The Vedic Vision, however well

preserved by the many expositions of great acaryas, yet unfolds no unified Vision (Samanvaya), though with some effort and grace we might arrive at a harmonisation of the several visions. At the present juncture, this is being done by intellectual giants through an awakened and independent reason. A more disciplined and dedicated reason which does not yearn at revolutionary interpretations is perhaps more the need rather than the skeptical and casuistical reason enthroned today as the novum organum. Therefore, there is an attempt to hold that the goal is to arrive at that very instrument of vision which the Vedic rsis possessed, that divine eye (divyacakshus) which will reveal the eternal reality in all its glory and fullness. The question would yet arise whether, after all, the rsis did possess that Vision; and to this question divergent answers are given by evolutionists and perfectionists or eternalists. The decision here again cannot be by speculative reasoning but by a decisive approach to the Vision itself - a Vision that is dependent upon an attainment and a possession of the mystic insight, intuition, and revelation, even like that of the Vedic rsis or seers.

Since this insight was somehow lost or fell into disuse in the course of ages, the necessity to regain that has become imperative. Perhaps, once this insight becomes the normal mode of apprehension of Reality, it would be possible to assess the claims of the modern thinkers and

that of the Ancient Seers. Firstly, we have yet to determine whether the modern thinkers have evolutionarily, arrived at that height of Vision of the Real, or have only devaluated reality to appearance and the neat patterns that their empiricism, pragmatism and instrumentalism had instructed. The claim made by modern seers to have advanced beyond the rsis has to be looked into more closely. Exceptional circumstances have produced geniuses, but genius has not become the common property or endowment of man. So long as there is lack of the higher kind of reasoning, of intuition, there is bound to be relative blindnesses in perception, reasoning and even intuitions.

The development of these perceptions and intuitions is the basic need which must be felt in the depths of one's being, and this is what will ultimately determine our Visional possibility.

Darsana requires preparation to see, and see rightly through the proper instruments of seeing and knowing. This is a preparation for realising one's goal. The preparation to connect oneself with Reality in its vastest and minutest forms is itself Yoga. It is the yoking of oneself to the task of realising, visioning, Reality. It is to shut out all other aims and goals. In one word it is dedication (diksa).