

CHAPTER : VII

RELEVANCE, FITNESS AND UTILITY OF THE PRESENT

TEXT IN THE MODERN AGE

INTRODUCTORY :

It is necessary to consider the question of the relevance fitness & utility of the present text in the Modern Age of Science & Technology - how far & in what manner, it can be said to be helpful for the betterment of the Modern World, swiftly progressing with the inventions of electronic instruments & terrorizing emergence of Atomic energy.

MODERN WORLD OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY :

Hence, it is evident that eventhough science has contributed to the greatest amenities of life, on account of advancement of science & technology and growth of industry, thereby accelerating the explosion of production, in plenty & variety; it is a sad fact that science has also been causal in producing highly destructive weapons like hydrogen & nuclear bombs, that can annihilate the entire world, within no time. Due to industrialization, as a resultant effect, the ecological balance - the evolutionary & inherent order of Nature is violently disturbed & this has created the problem of pollution in all respects - nay, even the extinction of various species & substances. Thus science, which has been considered to be the boon to human society is turning itself into a dreadful curse & can lead us ultimately to the total annihilation, if not properly & rationally handled & put to useful & constructive purposes.

SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE :

From the social standpoint also, the picture is very gloomy. The significance of our ancient institutions is gradually diminishing & there is no replacement by an adequately suitable new social set-up. Ideals & values of moral life have lost their significance in the society. The life has become merely materialistic. The importance of the spiritual & moral ideas has been forgotten. Hence there is neither peace of mind nor happiness nor contentment. The entire life has become intranquil & uncertain. This would surely lead to the chaos & anarchy in the society.

RELEVANCE & SIGNIFICANCE - INSIGHT, FORESIGHT & FARSIGHT OF THE SEERS :

Dr. Radhakrishnan rightly observes, "when civilization is in peril & the schemes of social reconstruction are in the air, it is wise to know, what the seers of the past have said on the deeper problems of thought & life"¹. The revered seers, equipped with insight, foresight & farsight, have not only "seen" the Mantras of Vedas, but also have recollected the precepts of norms of ideal human conduct, that lead towards the achievement of personal & social welfare. Devala is one of such seers, whose reflections on the problems of religion & philosophy would definitely be helpful in the attempt of re-orientation & reconstruction of socio-cultural set-up.

PRINCIPLE OF DHARMA :

Moreover, it is the urgent & pressing need of the hour to investigate into the nature of the principle of Dharma, which

is at the root of preservation & maintenance of the entire universe or creation & as values & ends of human life, which can contribute to the order, cohesion & well-being of the same. By pointing out the 'quintessence of Dharma' & by enlisting virtues as constituents of Dharma, Devala has laid great stress on the ideals of life. He has also enumerated, defined & explained three kinds of vices - mental, verbal & physical & pointed out the practicable & sure ways of elimination thereof. This is very important in the Modern world of degenerating social values & moral understanding. No society can ever live happily & peacefully, if the vices play a predominant role over virtues therein.

CHANGING & UNCHANGING ASPECTS :

In an ideal human society, there should be a proper relation of an individual with another individual, with his family-members & the community at large, all of which together & harmoniously contribute to the universal welfare, in which the individual & social good can simultaneously be achieved. Such directives, regarding ideal human society have been laid down by the seers, along with the time-honoured outward changes, that were necessary for the general good.

Shri J.R.Gharpure notes that, "society has been changing & with it, the ideas also.....As, however, the fundamental principles are sound & with changing details could be applicable at all times mutantis mutandis, society has been able to maintain its moorings, though the outwardly visible garb may have seemingly changed"².

Hence, it is quite natural to find every scripture to be having two sides, as remarked by Dr. Radhakrishnan, "every scripture has two sides, one temporary & perishable, belonging to the ideas of the people of the period & the country, in which it is produced & the other eternal & imperishable & applicable to all ages & countries. The intellectual expression & the psychological idiom are the products of time, while the permanent truths are capable of being lived & seen by a higher than intellectual vision at all times"³.

The Smritis deal with several aspects of society, such as, laws, acts, statutes, rules, regulations, orders, proclamations, customs, conventions & duties - based upon the two aspects of reality - one changing impermanent & perishable, while the other, unchanging, eternal & imperishable. The rules, that are based upon the former would be equally changing with the difference in the external atmosphere, e.g. Kalivarjya (not applicable in Kali era), but the latter do not change at any time & place. The former may be described as 'orders', issued by the king or an authority, in accordance, with the changing circumstances, but the latter is 'law' (Dharma), that can never change; it is eternal, universal & irrevocable.

CHANGING ASPECT ALSO SIGNIFICANT :

The ideas may change, but the fundamental problems remain the same. The solution to these problems may be in accordance with the changing circumstances, but even while solving most of the social & religious problems, the earlier historical cases

& their solutions, can be of much help, as they always serve as examples in concrete. Thus from the historical standpoint, the significance of the present text, as an ancient historical treatise, that tried to solve the socio-religious problems, for the sake of betterment, stability & well-being of Hindu society, cannot be undermined. For example, the problem of readmittance of Hindus, converted to Islam has been specially & effectively brought out & considered by Devala. His procedure & device provide at least guidelines & are worth, being employed in the case of those, who wish to adopt Hindu fold, in the latest socio-religious upheavals & onslaught.

Moreover, the Dharmasastra works are the treasurehouse of our knowledge of various aspects of human life & society. They can reflect much upon our ancient society, religion, philosophy, law, politics, history, geography, psychology etc. "Institutions are now viewed as growths, which suggest lines of evolution"⁴. Hence the history of any of the above fields cannot be complete & exhaustive, unless the information, available in those treatises is collected, referred to & scrutinized. The present ancient text of Devala is replete with all such information & hence deserves great historical significance. Prof. Max Muller once remarked that, "People that could feel no pride in the past, in its history..... had lost the mainstay of its national character".⁵

UNCHANGING IS MORE SIGNIFICANT :

The changing aspect, treated in the treatise can thus be important from the historical point of view. However, the unchang-

ing aspect - the universal laws & eternal truths, the topics of spiritual importance - are all the more significant than the changing aspects. Especially, the present text deals with the Sāṅkhya-Yoga philosophy, which is in conformity with the ancient Sāṅkhya-Yoga works. These ancient treatises the basis of Devala's exposition of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga have been completely lost now. Hence the information, available in the present text about the Sāṅkhya-Yoga is of great importance from this point of view of history of Sāṅkhya-Yoga philosophy & for understanding the nature & import of these ancient treatises, the information about which is hardly available.

From the practical point of view also, the process of Yoga, as expounded by Devala is of great value, even to the Modern spiritual disciples & aspirants of Yoga, in the Modern World, where the importance & of Yoga is being greatly felt, recognized & emphasized, even in the foreign countries. Devala's ideas about Yoga would be of much interest & practical utility, if properly understood. His explanations are easy, useful & extremely practical to any follower of Yoga.

Moreover, for the religious adherant, the present text is one of those ancient treatises, that can guide him, in his practical life. He can get a good deal of information, both religious & philosophical, that can be helpful even now, in determining his practical way of day-to-day life, as also a pious & judicious practice thereof.

CONCLUSION :

To conclude, I feel it to be my sacred duty to put on record that my heart is filled with a kind of blissfulness, as I treat myself blessed for having been graced by the Almighty, in inspiring me to undertake the retrieval of the invaluable contribution of Devala, a great sage of repute & a highly respected law-giver, who has been so held in high esteem by all his successors in the field.

REFERENCES

1. S. Radhakrishnan - General preface to the book 'Pūrvamīmāṃsā, in its sources, by Mm.Ganganath Jha.
2. Gharpure, J.R. - Teachings of Dharmasāstra, pp.100-101.
3. S.Radhakrishnan - The Bhagavadgītā, Preface, p.8.
4. Aiyangar, Rangaswami - Rajadharma, p.21.
5. Max Muller - vide - Banerjee S.C. - Smṛtimaterial in Mahābhārata (Vol.I), Text, Preface, p.ii.