

Reflection of Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra on Society and Religion

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Abstract: This article is focusing on the ideas of Sri Sri Thakur on Society and religion. Sri Sri Thakur Anukulchandra is remembered in the memory of many devotees and non devotees across the country and globe. He is popularly known as ‘Sada Guru’. He proved himself as a great religious preacher. He has preached spiritual and devotional thought. Individual life and his/her nature of work are linked with ideal and religion. The growth of social relations and social organizations have been integrated in his ideology. He emphasizes on individual nature, purpose and role in the society. He categorically talks of the impact of social environment on the growth of the individual where he brought the concept of ‘Living Ideal’. He contributed so many thoughts and ideas on society, religion, state, politics, government, law, administration etc. He focused his ideas in his preachings in different Ashrams which he established at his village in West Bengal state and at Baidyanath Dham in Deogarh district of Bihar.

Key words: Satsang, Ashram, Ideal, Varnashram, Dharma, Religion, Devine.

Received : 28 July 2021

Revised : 11 August 2021

Accepted : 19 August 2021

Published : 2 September 2021

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Barik, N., & Singh, B. (2021). Reflection of Sri Sri Thakur Anukul Chandra on Society and Religion, *Society and Culture Development in India*, 1: 1, pp. 45-54

Introduction

Sri Sri Thakur Anukulchandra was born on 14 September 1888, in Himaitpur village in Pabna district (now in Bangladesh). Anukulchandra inherited the virtuous qualities of his father Sibchandra Chakraborty and a spirit of complete devotion of his mother Monomohini Devi. After having elementary education in his village school, he married in 1906 at the age of eighteen keeping with the then tradition of early marriage among the Hindus. Later, he studied for some time in National Medical School in Calcutta and practiced medicine in his village for three years. He was more and more attracted to religious life and set up his own “Satsang” Ashram in Pabna, Later, he shifted to Deoghar in Santhal Parganas in Bihar in September

1946. Since then Sri Sri Thakur's "Satsang" Ashram in Deoghar, a traditional place of Hindu pilgrimage, continued to flourish. His life came to an end at this Ashram on 27 January 1969.

Views on Society

Society & Human Life

Sri Sri Thakur gives a very simple formula for a good social order. He says – “He who lives under one command leads into the society.” Here the command of the ideal is the only command because his purpose of command is only the being and becoming of man. To be within the command of the ideal is to have a perfect social order. Sri Sri Thakur includes society only those relations between men which have been embodied in associations, possessed of definite structure and organization. Thus the relations which are not organized in definite associations are excluded from the definition of society. Such a conception of society, however, is incomplete since unorganized personal relations, that constitute the cavity out of which organizations emerge, cannot be ignored in the study of Sociology. Sri Sri Thakur says that society exists only when the members know each other and possess common interests or objects. Thus if two persons are travelling in a train, their relationship of co-existence in the same compartment, of being at the same time in the same place, does not constitute society. But as soon as they come to know each other, the element of society is created (Ankulchandra, 1956, p.143). Sri Sri Thakur Anukulchandra advocated an Integral philosophy of life which is a suitable blending of the philosophies of the past Prophets and can be useful to the common man in his day-to-day practical life situations in this modern civilized world.

Society and Ideal

Thakur Says – “ideal means a living man who establishes him in his environment through his real life service, contact and sympathy; Now it is clear that ‘Ideal’ is otherwise known as ‘God of men’. Sri Sri Thakur recognizes that transcendent personality as ‘Ideal’ in whom all the virtues exhibited by human beings are embedded and find their complete demonstration in perfect order. He is the ‘God of men’ like Jesus Christ, Sri Krishna, Sri Buddha, Hazrat Mahammad, Sri Chaitnaya, Sri Ramakrishna etc. Therefore, he says, “He within whom all the resources of the world – knowledge, love and activity – are spontaneous, and by the inclination towards whom the scattered lives of men and all the diversities of the world find

a final solution, is the God of men”(Ankulchandra,1994, p.92). Through love and attachment to the ‘Ideal’, man can relate himself to the Supreme Existence i.e. God in heaven. ‘Ideal’ is the man with Divine Perfection. Both the humanity and divinity are consummated in the ‘Ideal’.

The Ideal plays the role in enabling the people to observe the laws and principles of existence, suiting the age. When it is found that the people deviate from the laws and principles of existence i.e. Dharma, the human society suffers from chaos and disorder. At this chaotic condition of human society, the Supreme Existence manifests himself in the form of ‘Ideal’ in order to streamline the conduct and behavior of the people towards the observance of the laws and principles for being and becoming of life. In other words, an ‘Ideal’ comes down to make Dharma meaningful to human life. The most important role of an ‘Ideal’ is to fulfill the aim of life in the best possible manner. The aim of life is to achieve the Cosmic Consciousness by relating it with God, the Transcendent Reality. But the human being forgets his Transcendental aspect, being dominated by passions and complexes for which he cannot realize his relation with God. Therefore, Prophets (Ideals) come down to give the Divine Light. The ideal symbolizes the vital force – the upholding and protecting power and the every fresh flow of a perpetual existential fountain of the society. It is thus that the people so congregated create a great grand platform on the basis of loving harmony and integration, and a new culture of social order springs up. Added to this, the ideal issues imperatives like do not kill anybody, do not steal, do not divorce, do not stand as false witness, do not commit adultery, and etc. These are the social stigmas which do not ordinarily take place if one leads ideal-centric life. The society stands as one for all and all for one. To achieve a healthy, happy, balanced, coherent and consistent existence, both of body and mind, every individual has to have a living ideal-as opposed to simply ideas, concepts and theories - at the centre of his life as his love.

Sri Sri Thakur has said that the ideal of man has to be the promoter of the being towards perfection. He has to be the very epitome of love, sympathy, compassion, service and all such divine qualities and virtues and the one who not only feels every being and thing to be an integral part of his own self, but demonstrates that in his own conduct. His teachings have to be the gospel of life and universally applicable without time and community. He is the most evolved man of the age and is complete in personality as no one else can be. He knows where the welfare of the individual as well as the society lies more than any other person does. Without him life on this earth is like a tottering ship in turbulent ocean. He is beloved the great, the all-fulfiller Purushottam of the Age. By being “adhered to beloved the great

with all thy (our) mighty urge” alone can we learn to adjust meaningfully with our environment- “with every active progressive go and be fit to survive”(Misra, 2018, pp. 59-60).

Society and Individual

The depth and expansion of the great and holy sayings of Sri Sri Thakur encompassing and embracing every aspect of human life -individual, conjugal, social, international- are unmistakable, sure solutions to all problems that can arise in any sphere of human activity which are truly unfathomable. They are the very embodiment of practical wisdom which can fulfill every individual from low to the high, from the ignorant to the learned, from the poor to the rich and from the meanest to the noblest. Yet, “he is normally normal, gorgeously simple and wisely foolish’. He is the incarnation of love and wisdom who spent every moment of his stupendously noble life for the sake of every individual as well as the mankind, He is the light, the way towards divinity, the guide to. eternal peace, happiness, tranquility and above all, immortality in this mortal life of ours. He beckons everyone as his son and daughter, not for any selfish purpose, but for the survival and growth of mankind in these turbulent, problem-ridden times. It is time that all men and women shed their ego, adjust their complexes and accept him as the Guru, this Universal Teacher of our time while this rare life of our lasts.

It is only through steadfast attachment to the ideal and active service (for carrying out his commandments) that a person’s mind and attitude get organically organized and his behaviour vis-a-vis his environment becomes consistently normal, simple and amiable, thus rendering his surrounding propitious and compatible resulting in peace of mind and all-round prosperity. Without taking this recourse, any person, however great may be his or her attainment in any field of life, shall end up in having a dual or split personality whereby peace and fulfillment in life shall remain. One’s constant and steadfast adherence to the ideal brings about a transformation of personality (Misra, 2018, pp.60-61). While most of us are aware that we cannot simply live by ignoring our surrounding, we are scarcely conscious about our duty or responsibility towards it. Even if some may be theoretically aware, they are rarely, if at all, committed to action. It is, after all, necessary to develop propitious traits, habits, behaviour, skills etc. for the welfare of both our individual and collective life. From individual we expand towards conjugal life, family, society, state, international society and the universe. Such expansion is a universal law of nature.

It is imperative, therefore, that the life of every individual becomes organized, meaningful, purposeful and actively pursuant of the collective goal in order that any social objective can truly be achieved. No external inputs, aimed' at achieving collective welfare of the state or international order shall be able to bring about the dividends by ignoring the development of every single individual.

Society and Marriage

According to Sri Sri Thakur, the society is a reflection of the elements it comprises. Hence, improvement of the society depends on the quality of individuals who go to make it. He has clearly laid out the rules, based upon eugenic principles of nature, which need to be followed to bring better progeny of a generous, regardful, concentric and honest nature. Through proper regulation of marriage the germ cells passed from generation to generation can be improved. The germ cells will continually improve under a system of marriage based upon the principle of Varnashram. Marriages among members of the same varna are most avoidable. Hypogamous 'marriage is harmful and so is marriage between people of common blood. It is only through marriage in consonance with varnashramic principles that devout-spirited men will be born and only then will a real welfare state evolve. Marriage is not only a biological necessity of man, but by it life is given birth through the cohesive adherence of husband of wife. Sri Sri Thakur tells – “The fusional adherence that evolves into being, with responsive becoming is life.” This fusional adherence cannot be named other than love between husband and wife. On the other hand the male and the female are made of certain elements. The father contributes the qualities and the tendency into the child which the mother cannot and not capable of the mother nourishes the qualities and contributes temperament to the child. This becomes sound when a male of higher trait marries a female of lower trait than he. The marriage there by is known as compatible and the reverse of it is incompatible and condemnable. Sri Sri Thakur tells for the reform of marriage in compatible line so that the child can preserve all ancestral qualities in him and can be long-lived with all good qualities. In the incompatible marriage neither the child can carry the hereditary qualities nor can avoid short life span and shall be without having an integrated personality. The natural outcome of incompatible marriage is rampant divorce putting the children into a state of no-fostering care and thus into compelling them to be wayward from the very blossom of life. But ordinarily it is very difficult to determine to go of life normally because man is always swayed over by passions, obsessions and the

impression of past life. So it is the best for everybody to be adhered to an ideal or living spiritual guide.

Views on Dharma and Religion

As Sri Sri Thakur starts to save man at life itself, his mission is to infuse Dharma into the life of everybody. To him Dharma is – “the laws that sustain life and growth with every effulgence of personality both individually and collectively.” His concept of Dharma is ‘if we want to live (and it is the longing of everybody) we cannot live without being doing well and nurturing the environment which means everything encircling. Hence Dharma, in the knowledge of Sri Sri Thakur does not include sectarianism, rather it is universal. It is possible only by propagating and establishing the Ideal and his mission in the environment. To him, Dharma is the upholder of life and that’s why he says “that which upholds every individual with due nurture of both individual and collective life may be called dharma” (Mukhopadhaya, 1997, p. 67).

Furthermore, he considers Dharma to be the only ‘ism’ of life and says “where the nurture of existence evolves into upheaving enthusiastic ardent active urge with complacent service, interest flow there and people gather, community flourishes, society comes into being with freedom and rolls into the One-the Love-the smooth advent, whose doctrine is love, life growth and piety, commune of people smiles there with the trickle of nectar; hence Dharma that upholds existence is the only ‘ism’ of life, interest of the common, sovereignty blossoms there and love winks in smile.” Though ‘Dharma’ and ‘Religion’ are used as synonymous terms, there exists a basic difference between the two.

Dharma

According to Sri Sri Thakur, the work ‘Dharma’ is derived from the root word ‘Dhri’ which means ‘to uphold’, ‘to maintain’. Sri Sri Thakur connotes the term ‘Existence’ as Satta. According to him, the word satta is derived from the root word ‘sat’. and the word ‘sat’ is derived from the root word ‘Ash’ i.e. . Be ‘Sat’, Sri Sri Thakur means ‘that which has existence’. In true sense, the word ‘sat’ signifies ‘Lord’ or ‘Ista’(Mukhopadhaya, 1997, p.67). Hence, it is clear that ‘existence’ is the ‘essence’ of a being as individual entity which enables the being to exist. Sri Sri Thakur reveals that ‘Dharma’ means the laws and principles which govern our life and growth. Life means ‘being’ and growth means ‘becoming’. Hence, Dharma is the universal principle which upholds our ‘being’ and enhances our ‘becoming’.

Sri Sri Thakur says Dharma is that which nurtures our life and growth. Hence, Dharma is one, But there appears difference of opinions regarding the concept of Dharma among different religious sects and communities. For example, conventionally, the principle followed by the Hindu Community is known as Hindu – Dharma, that followed by the Christian community is known as Christian Dharma. Similar is the case with Muslim Community, Jainas and Buddhas giving rise to Mahammedan Dharma, Jaina Dharma and Buddhist Dharma respectively. Each community claims its so-called Dharma to be superior to that of the other. This idea of imposition of one faith over the other is giving rise to class-conflicts which create chaos and disorder throughout the world. But Sri Sri Thakur views, “Dharma never becomes many. The purpose of each view (the so-called Dharma) is to solve the problems of life. The problems in life arise due to want of ‘peace and happiness’. All views coincide with the agreement that ‘Peace and happiness’ can be achieved in human life through the attainment of ‘Truth’, ‘Goodness’ and ‘Beauty’ which according to Sri Sri Thakur is the object of Dharma(Ankulchandra,1994, p. 93).

Religion

According to Sri Sri Thakur, the word ‘Religion’ is derived from two Latin root words ‘re’ (means ‘again’) and ‘ligare’ (means ‘to bind’). Hence, ‘religion’ means ‘to bind again’ or ‘binding again’ (Mukhopadhaya, 1997, p.139). Sri Sri Thakur connotes “the Master-Exponent’ as the ‘Living Ideal’ with whom the individual has to be attached in love, making him the centre and to lead his life, carrying out his commandments. Sri Sri Thakur’s view, Religion means a living attachment between the individual and his Superior Beloved. This Superior Beloved is an Individual Incarnate of Love and knowledge who is the Divine Man of the present. Sri Sri Thakur connotes this Divine Man as the ‘Ideal’, who is the Lord of the individual and by ‘Religion’ he means the union of the soul of the individual with that of the Ideal.

Relationship between ‘Dharma’ and ‘Religion’

The relationship between ‘Dharma’ and ‘Religion’ is very intimate. Religion is the very spirit of Dharma. ‘Dharma’ is meaningless without ‘Religion’ and vice versa as the man without soul. If a man is attached to the ‘Ideal’, but ignores other principles of healthy maintenance (Dharma), Religion cannot save him alone. On the other hand, if an individual observes the laws and principles of existence (which are required for Dharma) excepting his attachment to an Ideal, Dharma cannot

sustain his existence alone. Hence, for existence of an individual, both Dharma and Religion are indispensable. Dharma stands on Religion. It is clear that 'Dharma' and 'Religion' are complementary to each other. One cannot exist without the other 'Dharma' upholds existence and 'Religion' binds the individual with the 'Ideal'. Hence, it is binding for the individual to fulfill both 'Ideal' and 'existence' in order to lead a healthy life (Ankulchandra,1997, pp. 24-25).

God and Individual

Sri Sri Thakur accepts this concept when he says, "God creates individual out of individual being unique in everything accordingly"(Ankulchandra,1988, p.140). It implies that individual is born with God-hood. Since God is unique and perfect, individual is endowed with uniqueness and perfection. But individual forgets this due to ignorance which results from the influence of passions and complexes. Hence, individual can realize the Supreme Consciousness, if he/she gets adjusted through sublimation of his/her passions and complexes. God is always merciful to individual. Then a question arises – why does an individual undergo sorrows and sufferings? This is not God's desire. This is because of individual's deviation from the right path. individual is endowed with free-will which is the grace of God. But Sri Sri Thakur points out 'when he /she misuses his/her free-will, he/she creates evil for himself/herself, builds up the ground for his/her sufferings.'

God is not responsible for individual's pleasure or pain. If an individual desires to direct his activities in an evil way, then he/she is subjected to sorrows and sufferings. On the other hand, if he/she directs his/her activities in good direction, then he/she is subjected to peace and happiness. Therefore, Sri Sri Thakur says, "God never determines peace or pain for individual. As person desires and does, so he /she receives. If a person moves in a way that results in painful sufferings, his/her mere desire to enjoy happiness carries no value. If a person does the wrong, but desires the right, he/she deceives himself as well as others." But individual's wrong action does not deprive him/her of God's mercy. The grace of God is just like the sunlight. As the sunlight falls on everything, either good or bad, so also the grace of God enlightens everybody, whether good or evil. Hence, Sri Sri Thakur asserts, "As the sunbeam is the grace (mercy) of the sun, so the grace of the Supreme Father is the beam of life, beam of vigour, beam of power that have kept us alive. When the individual swings in sorrows and sufferings out of his evil actions, he/she prays for help. At this time of need, God's grace becomes immanent in him/her. And "God as the upholding urge in life, strives to help him/her survive." Though Sri

Sri Thakur believes in Individualism, he never denies the 'Love and Worship' to God. It is imperative on the part of individual to love and worship God along with freedom of actions. Because, God is part and parcel of individual's existence; without love and tribute to individual it is very difficult on his part to direct his/her activities in good direction and enjoy heavenly bliss. Therefore, Sri Sri Thakur says, "We all are his children to love and follow him is our Dharma. That is our existence".

Consciousness

Consciousness, according to him, is the "basic element by which we can discern anything with its feeling and properties which come from super consciousness flow with graduated materializing form that all consciousness may be conscientious in conflict with others". Again, as per him the "throb of consciousness evolves into conscience through the impulse of the environment" and keeps life awake imparting gradual growth through the nature of environment. "Thus, while the need for a zealously and active interest on the part of every individual in his environment is absolutely indispensable for the sake of developing conscientious consciousness, essential for an elevated existential becoming of man, Sri Sri Thakur underlines its undeniable role in shaping our memory which again is so essential for our survival and growth(Misra, 2018, p. 50).

Conclusion

Throughout his life, Thakur Anukulchandra proved to be not only a great religious leader but also a great organizer of men and institutions. He has left behind a treasure of knowledge about society, religion, politics, law and administration, which seem to have great relevance in our time. Sri Sri Thakur has referred so many concepts like Sat-chit-ananda, religion, Diksa, Sadhana, Surrender, Universal brotherhood, Samadhi, Kaivalya, Mahachettana, etc. and interpreted there in a novel way. He has grasped the sastras like Upanisad, Veda, Vedanta and Bhagbat Gita very well and projected how the preachings can be practiced by a common man without much difficulties. He insisted on keeping one's conscience alive and follow the path of conscience, as that track is the surest path and guide, the beacon-light in the march of life (Bhattacharya, 1987, p.150). Sri Sri Thakur is clear in his vision on Society, Education, Politics, Economics, Culture, Spirituality, State and Government.

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