

## Truth as Personal Experience.

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अन्तर्ब्रह्मविभागोऽयं देहापेक्षो न साक्षिणः ।

—*Naishkarmyasiddhi*.

Some ten years ago a historic meeting took place between the two great geniuses of the modern world—Tagore and Einstein. The subject of their discussion was the nature of Truth, and the views that the two thinkers represented are characteristic of the thought of the East and of the West. Einstein held the view that Truth has a being of its own, it is independent of human realization. Tagore, on the other hand, advanced the view that all Truth is human. No truth is truth which is not experienced by anyone, which is independent of human experience.

The view held by Einstein is the scientific view; it is the realist's outlook on facts of the world. On the other hand, Tagore represents the standpoint of those who hold mind to be the centre of creation—the view which in the West was for the first time asserted emphatically by Berkeley, who declared:—"All the choir of heaven and the furniture of the earth are in a mind."

The scientific view seems very plausible. The planet Neptune did exist before it was discovered. So also there are thousands of other facts about nature which are facts even though we do not know them. As a matter of fact, if the whole of Truth consisted in our knowing it,

truth would be too poor. Its contents would be meagre and ever-changing. For very often our views about a fact change. Truth thus would be liable to constant change. It would be no truth.

The very essence of truth seems to consist in its objectivity—that is, its independence of being an experience of any individual. Truth which is an individual experience is only relative. Human truths, it is very often asserted, are half-truths, hence no one should be dogmatic about them.

The above position seems unassailable. How can all truth be human truth? The implication of this position is that the human mind not merely knows truth but it makes truth. This is exactly what the Poet meant. The materialists, the scientists, regard matter as the root-principle of creation; they regard mind as an evolute of matter. But if we think a little deeper, we would discover that it is consciousness that is at the centre of creation as well as all the theories about it. Who would posit matter as the all-powerful God manifesting itself in the form of this world, were there not a mind to call it as the all-powerful God? We are here reminded of a remark of Schopenhauer in this connection. Speaking of the materialists, he says, "Though they think that they have all the time been talking about matter,

they have really been talking about the mind that thinks of matter." There is no matter without mind.

That truth is objective and something universal, no one would deny. But its objectivity or universality is not a bar to its being a personal experience. What I experience may be experienced by others also. Human mind always tries to have the truth. The standard of truth is fixed by itself. No standard of truth can be a standard which is not recognized as such by the human mind. It is the human mind itself which creates the division of experience as subjective and objective and establishes a standard of truth and falsehood. We regard what is objective and universal as truth, but ultimately to regard anything as objective or as universal is again a matter of our own choice. We are an individual on the one hand, and on the other we partake of the life universal. No knowledge would be possible if we did not have this dual nature.

Not only this, since the division of universal and individual occurs in one's own consciousness, the self has an absolute existence—it over-reaches or surpasses all such divisions. The self which supplies the criterion of truth is above all relations. It is

only in virtue of its being so that it establishes or recognizes any standard at all.

Critical thought leads us to the view that nothing is independent of consciousness. All standards and all values have meaning only therein. What is a fact and what is not a fact is also a matter of conscious recognition. This consciousness, though it seems to stand in opposition to what is objective, really contains all objectivity. On the one hand, it is a direct experience to us, on the other it holds the remotest planets within itself. As the R̥ṣis of yore sang:

तदेजति तन्नैजति तदूरे तद्वन्तिके ।  
तदनन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥

( Isha, 5. )

When the Poet said "All truth is human", he hinted at the above truth enunciated by the Upaniṣads.

We are not isolated individuals. We are intertwined with each other, and in the last analysis there is among us an identity of being. Hence no truth, wheresoever it may exist, can escape the realization of each soul, for a soul is nothing but a window from which the Universal Mind, who cognizes all truth, peeps out.

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Those who are solely devoted to God chant His Name with every breath. Some chant 'Om Rama Om' constantly within themselves. The votaries of the path of Knowledge chant 'Soham'. Of some, the tongue moves constantly (in uttering prayers or some *Mantra* ).

—Swāmi Rāmākṛṣṇa Paramahansa.

