



A Study of The Disintegration and Fragmentation of Human Psyche and Walt Whitman's Spiritual Recipe for The Disturbed Biorhythm of Post Post-Modern Indian Society

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ABSTRACT

The various spiritual orders which have come up as the times passed have been answers provided by society to the nagging questions of living. The society would have been a barbarian tribe in the absence of various prophets after whom the network of religious beliefs was woven. Christianity, Islam, Sufism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jews—all these religions have behind them an inspiring figure; and the establishments which were raised on their teachings have served as a great civilizing force as the times progressed. Fighting and killings apart, the dominant theme of these religions was to provide a code of conduct in social living, so that people could connect themselves with their society, as well as with the divine. But as we enter into the 21st century, we find that the hold of religion on the people has decidedly grown, but their interest in spirituality has declined. There is no active movement of the people towards spirituality. It is depression, frustration, arising out of a competition-ridden society, which are forcing them to turn to spiritual gurus for consolation. The basic difference can be seen here between the people of the last phase of the previous century, and the the people of the first phase of this century; they had a genuine faith in religion; and religion had the power to clip their wayward desires, and keep them on the

path of righteousness. But, in the first phase of the present century, it can be witnessed that people have lost faith in religion. They have developed religiosity, but essentially, they believe in no God, and fear no devil. It is a world driven by jealousy, lust, fame, wealth, power and prosperity. It can be easily seen that more and more people are moving morning and evening into religious places, yet, they get no solace. The burning imagination of the entire race has actually no faith in religion. These are the degenerated people, the fragmented personalities of our times, of this post post-modern age, who are in desperate need of spiritual consolation. And, their this need has been answered by the rise of various spiritual orders, like The Art of Living, Brahma Kumaris, Osho, Dera Sacha Sauda and Nirmal Baba. It appears that the religious places, which are build around various scriptures, have failed to touch the soul of the modern men; who yearn for a direct exchange with the divine, and want magic solutions to their problems.

Keywords:

Walt Whitman, spirituality, biorhythm, religion, spiritual dynamics.



FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR SPIRITUAL DECLINE:

There have been various factors responsible for the rise of spiritual gurdoms:

1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS:

Man is essentially an economic being, and all his reflexes depend on how he is materially placed in a social set up. A look at any social set up would give a clear message that society is based on injustice and inequality. When these things become intolerable, there are revolutions, a new set up is built, and after some time, it too develops defaults and is forcibly changed, if it does not show flexibility to absorb the changing realities of time. People who are suffering can be kept in that condition only if some body from a high tower tinged with religious authority could tell them to “resign to the will of God”. Their poverty and the riches of their masters was the will of God. And, it was religion which would provide their explanation as well as consolation for their plight. But, with the rise in the levels of education, man has become a doubting Tom. He cannot be lured into the wisdom which was responsible for the loot of his forefathers; and the new breed of educated people challenges the old order. Peace from society evaporates, and it is replaced by discontent. Struggle now turns into a burden, and not all are ready to comply with their parental attitudes. So, this is that society in which people have refused to accept God as the sole arbiter, and where people question why they are poor and why some are rich.. and why they cannot change this social system based on exploitation.

2. BREAKING UP OF THE VALUE SYSTEM

What has affected the biorhythm of the society is the breaking up of the value system. The social set up which had family at its centre has broken under the pressure of economics. Families have disintegrated, to give space to depression, quarrels, fightings, and distrust, leaving the children to the care of the TV, the electronic grand nanny. The religious outfit is growing in numbers and infrastructure, but its content is falling. Average Indian believed in God, and had trust in his fate. But now, average Indian has no trust in God. He has trust in pilgrimages, which is cosmetic and illusory only. Actually, he is not religious at heart. He believes in pretensions only. The third agency expected to build up the moral fibre of society was the school. Education has failed the litmus test. It is now at the most a training for getting jobs. And that is all. We have left behind and discarded all models of model education. Dr. Radha Krishanan no longers inspires our educators today. Every one is after fast buck. So are educationists. Things are in a decline in all the three agencies which were expected to better human stuff and refine his soul has lost their value.

In fact, we are operating in a moral vaccum and it has taken the toll of human values. It is a barren land, a waste land, lacking faith, and fertility. The civilization is growing, but this growth is only horizontal. Vertically, we have lost our depth.



3. RACE AGAINST TIME: SUCCESS THE BITCH GODDESS

The Faustian lusts have gripped human psyche and every man is after power, knowledge and fame. Success is a bitch goddess which compels men to achieve success at any rate. Men are today working 24x7 schedules, having no time for families. They cannot marry, and if married, life is a hell for them. Most of the time, they are riding motorbikes. No doubt, they are well dressed like gentlemen, but they are frames only, lacking the human instinct. Survival and success are the ruling passions of the modern generation. Passion for wealth and knowledge and fame has grown to their heads, and in this race, they do not bother about any moral considerations, not even their families. We young men and women in a mad race for whom career matters, and nothing else. Such targeted people do not give us a good society. They are actually disturbing the rhythm of the society.

4. RISE OF A CULTURE LESS SOCIETY:

It is not easy to say that it is the lack of women in the kitchen that has actually led to the fall of the family, and the rise of a cultureless society. The modern society is breeding on the anti culture of the TV channels, and very small kids are being exposed to the dangerous ideas like rapes and violence. When they grow up, they grow up with an ingrained sense of insecurity, and a deep passion for vengeance and revenge. Killing comes easy to them. Video games are enough to make them lose sight of the real values of life.

These conditions in society have disturbed the flow of human thought, and fractured the human sensibility.

5. EXCESSIVE RELIGIOSITY: LOSS OF CONTENT

There has been a divorce between religiosity and spirituality. Religions have stooped to spread hatred, violence, discrimination, and repression, and have deviated from the path of universal love and oneness of mankind. Most cultured religions like Christianity, when they were to expand their frontiers, used all sorts of allurements and temptations to increase their reach in the dark regions of the earth. But the Muslim way of forced conversions has written history in blood. Hindu chauvinism has never taken that shape, and the trident has been used only in self defence. But these are the days of the mass media, where religion has been used as a product, and being sold at Teleshopping episodes. There is more wealth in the coffers of the temples than one can imagine while remaining a normal human being. Marxists believed that religion is an opium which drugs the poor masses. Religion has been used extensively to spread superstition and blind faith. Even today, things have not changed. Mass media has turned this evil into a bigger menace. If in the past, a religious saint had followers in thousands, now they are in millions. Borders have ceased to exist, and ignorance knows no borders, nor any limits. The ultimate effect of such a state of affairs is the lack of elemental faith; and a sham interest in religiosity.



6. LACK OF 'SAMSKARA' (A SENSE OF TRADITIONAL VALUES)

The root of all the evils rampant in society is the near absence of 'Samskara' from the living patterns of the emerging society. We have discarded traditions, and opted for the new and the global, and the education system has also jumped all red lights. The 'Samskara' was injected in the human being by the family, the school and the temple. The biorhythm of society today has been affected badly by the fall of the family system, the breaking up of the moral authority of the school and the total irrelevance of religion in the scheme of things in modern life. Religion may be a very big force in dividing a society, but has it any role in the way the trading is done, or a businessman conducts himself? Where are religious values in the conduct of human beings? Religion remains confined only to the reading of books, of singing of hymns, that too on religious days. Most of the time, man is at the mercy of economic forces, and religion has nothing to do with his day to day life. Who has broken the family? In big cities, families have broken apart. Single parent families, and nuclear families are the order of the order. Life has shifted out of the home, and is lived more than half of it in the fast food joints. Similar is the fate of the school, where teachers have no sense of their moral obligations, and students haunt these places as picnic spots. These were the mainstay of life; and in modern living, these values have become obsolete. They have lost their relevance. Population is increasing, so is the number of students in the schools, and there is an exponential rise in the number of religious places. But even then, the society is shorn of its basic values. Students of today, and

men are having no 'Samskara' of sorts. It is all a rat race.

7. SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION

In Indian society, the constitution provides that there will be no gender discrimination. Still, it is practiced at a vast scales and hardly any pockets of society are aloof from this menace. Woman is looked upon as an object of pleasure and now, with the mass media ruling the roost, she is now a saleable commodity. Indian society is a patriarchal society, and women are rated second rate. They are at the receiving end. Because around 50% of the population is dispossessed of their proper rights, there is an imbalance in the growth of the society. This in fact is one of the major causes of disturbing the biorhythm of society. The absence of women from a graceful position of equality has harmed our social set up. It also needs to be mentioned that the freedom to the female gender in the elite society has resulted in a different kind of disorder. Women have altogether moved out of the kitchen, breaking the family system, and denying the protection children require in their adolescent years. All this helps shape a personality which is over exposed to societal pressures, over sensitive and over-clinical in its approach to social problems. We are producing youngsters who are self-possessed, and do not possess behavioural tendencies which promote a unified social living, rather they believe in a personal self which grows larger at the cost of the society. Children are now pitted against their parents for their freedom and career choices, marriage, and relationships, and the society is at the breaking point because, we have not developed any alternative modes of living in which necessary freedom is



incorporated to young growing minds who are being shaped by international influences.

All this has created havoc in society, which is now rampant in moral corruption, and people are always busy cutting and undercutting one another, in their pursuit of personal power and wealth. Perhaps that is the reason the modern generation has no one to look up to as their role models, except successful business magnates and corporate, who have amassed great wealth by the optimum use of their wits, but at the same time impoverished the society in which they have been living. Such immoderate stories of success are oiling the roots of the tree of wisdom, and bringing upheaval in society.

8. CRISIS OF CHARACTER:

Indian society is passing through a phase of moral disorder because it has lost the mainstay of religion. Other than religion, it is education only which can help build a personality with a solid character. Character means a man's convictions on which he is never ready to compromise. What is visible in Indian context is a shift from conviction to compromise. National character is absent from our dealings. The scams in military equipment purchases, in Commonwealth Games, coupled with so many others, only point out that our sense of character has given way to our sense of powerfulness. Mr. Right has been replaced with Mr. Success. Religion has stopped exercising any positive influence on the politicians. And politicians are now in the driving seat of the universe. For them, nothing matters more than expediency. They have not written any books like Jawahar Lal Nehru or Mahatama Gandhi to whose philosophy they

might have to adhere. Here is a world in which philosophy is dead. We are moving on the carcass of philosophy. All our religiosity is a sham. The great teachings of the Gita, the Mahabharata, and even the Ramayana, are meant only for a healthy discussion on the dining table. Nothing more. The festivals like Diwali and Dussehra have been corporatized; similar is the case with 'Raakhi'. These things have only symbolic value for us. Nothing more. Indian society has turned into a junk of sorts into which religious teachings are thrown away. Naturally, what we come across is absolute lack of character, which is a potential threat to the biorhythm of the society.

9. MAL-DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND RESOURCES:

Mal-distribution of wealth and its resources has led to vertical division of society into haves and have-nots. On one side, wealth is multiplying, and on the other hand, poverty. The onset of the techno-age has led to the creation of multiplicity of jobs, but their character is anti-human. The ruling doctrine of 24x7 is a killer device which destroys a man's vacant hours, and his time for his family life. In the past, a man's salary was enough to run a household with five to six children. But today, man and woman have to work hard, and subject their small kids to untold suffering and deprivation, yet they cannot make both ends meet. This is a greater poverty concealed in consumerist extravagance. The biggest question here is: are these people living? Or just living? There have been malls where materials are sold in abundance. But, does it mean riches? Farmers have sold off their holdings and made for the cities to lead a life of



luxury, while the ordinary people in cities cannot foot their electricity bills, not to talk of medical facilities and education of their wards. Subsequent governments have decided to disinvest in education and medical aid to the citizens, who pay hefty taxes, and the ministers are making a fast buck, leaving the country men in the lurch. Here, all the causes appear to be working in tandem to create a chaotic situation in society where the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing. In the past, religion used to assuage the pain of suffering, but now there is no such reservoir or buffer which could absorb the shocks. The disturbed biorhythm is in for a total catapulting of the situation, which also means turning the tide towards a bloody revolution.

The foregoing discussion proves beyond doubt the mercenary tendencies dominating the mindscape of the people have disturbed the biorhythm of society. It is a society which thinks of itself, each individual working for his own welfare, broken apart from the general current of society and this has happened because of the failure of the screening systems like the religion, the school and the break up of the family. The increasing crime in society can be directly linked to the fall of the moral structures and people's lack of faith in goodness, kindness, love and co-existence.

APPLYING WALT WHITMAN'S MYSTICAL BALM ON THE BRUISED SOUL OF SOCIETY:

From the previous chapter on Walt Whitman's mystical vision, we come across a comprehensive vision of a spiritual regime which is based on self-illumination, self-

purification, and moves on the axis of love, self-expansion, sympathy, humility, faith and honest work. Through these stages, the awakened soul realizes the universality of God which is the starting point for an awakened life style. Here, one can see humanity in its nudity, without the coverings of bodies and dresses, and finds God's presence behind all pretences. This brings in a rich reward of a glow of Divine Light, and a Blessed Mood set in. In this blessed mood, one finds oneself flooded with Love. In such a fluid state dawns the Vision Divine, in which man "welcomes" every object of the earth, [as Guru Nanak says: "Sache Tere Khand, Sache Brahmmand – i.e. true and real are your earths and this cosmos which belongs to you". It is that state of Ecstasy in which Walt Whitman says: "I should have made my way straight to you long ago" ['Leaves of Grass', Birds of Passage, p. 171]. Now, he realizes that heaping the riches of the world is not worth while and he says "You shall not heap up what is called riches/you shall scatter with lavish hand, all that you can earn or achieve" ['Song of the Open Road' p. 112]. In this blessed mood comes the realization that "All is a procession, and Universe is a processtion with a measure and perfect motion" and "Each has his or her place in this procession" ['Children of Adam, p. 74].

The next phase is the realm of Divine Communion, in which the spiritualist, after his revelations, returns to lead the life of a spiritual activist. Here, the spiritual activist is full of reformist zeal, and is opposed to religious fanaticism. Here, like Walt Whitman, he finds the world as a Commonwealth of Spirituality and aspires and works for World Community



and World Peace. Such persons cannot be grown in cities, or in closed mental circuits. He knows the art of growing the best men now:

“Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,

It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep

With the earth. “ [‘Leaves of Grass’ p. 110]

This is the vision which this trouble-torn world requires. Religion has drawn curtains, and divided the open air. People have lost touch with the earth.

And this world is short of the “best persons”. The world is replete with the second raters. Walt Whitman’s message is highly relevant to the post post-modern society, and herein lies the recipe to treat it of its multifarious ill.

In fact, the para-religious bodies which have emerged on the Indian scene are

trying to emulate what Walt Whitman has said, and the following chapters are devoted to a detailed study of their activities, their faith, and their vision, and the substantial contribution they have made in providing the “best persons”.

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