

Prof. K.S. Murty's Philosophy of Peace and Non-violence

Prof. K.S. Murty is one of the leading Indian Philosophers of our age. For him Philosophy is not the mere abstract thinking about the Ultimate Reality but an honest effort to solve the actual problems of humanity. That is why his work, 'The Quest for Peace' attracts philosophers, as well politicians and sociologists. Here, I would like to confine my observations about Prof. Murty's Philosophy to his work, 'The Quest for Peace'. This work is a testimony that his philosophy is related to the concrete and practical life and the actual perennial problems of human society. In this outstanding work he has not only presented the Hindu ideals dealing with the problem of war and peace but also critically analysed the causes of war, disturbing our social peace and the possibility for peace and non-violence. In the process, he critically evaluated the various theories pertaining to war and examined the various philosophies dealing with the concept of non-violence. In addition, at the end of his work, there is an epilogue where in he has suggested the awakening of world consciousness as a way out to get rid of the burning problem of war and violence.

Prof. K.S. Murty as a Realist

In this epilogue, he firmly maintains that it is only through the awakening of world consciousness that peace and prosperity can be restored on our globe. The most notable thing about Prof. K.S. Murty's 'Philosophy of Peace', is that in his examinations and evaluations he always remains a realist or a practical philosopher. Though he speaks of ideals yet he always keep them on the concrete foundation of actualities of human life. For him, human being is always human being, living with all its animal instincts. He observes, 'Men according to Hindu thinkers are not all sweet, reasonable and potentially saintly. There are some men with divine temperament while others with demonic temperament. In the present age i.e. Kaliyuga, the latter preponderates. Utopian dreams, where all men will lead blissful lives, consider all mankind as one family mutually and unselfishly helping each other, are silly. (P. 31-32) He further maintains. "There is, says Hinduism, an element of evil in human nature, Rajas (activistic tendency) and Tamas (inertia) are not wholly absent in any man; in some they predominate to such an extent that tranquility and goodness-Sattva- are never successful in

overcoming them." (P. 33)

So far as I understand the philosophy of Prof. K.S. Murty, he opines that the ideals or the norms of the society can not be built, putting aside the actualities of our lives. He never sees the Utopian dreams. Being a realist or actualist he always tries to see the practical-side of the problem. For him philosophy is some thing real or concrete and not mere abstract thinking. It is connected with our day to day problems. The philosophy unable to solve the riddle of our actual life is of no use and only a tool of intellect. He says, "so a social organisation which forgets this (actualities of human nature) and gives up altogether the use of force for maintaining order and enforcing law, based on righteousness, will end in chaos." (P. 32) Thus, we can conclude that Prof. K.S. Murty, about social ideals and norms, always remains a realist, having a deep understanding of actual human nature.

An Evaluation of K.S. Murty's Views about Non-Violence

With regard to the problems of war and peace or force and non-violence, Prof. Murty admits that the complete eradication of force, violence and wars from the earth is not possible at all. He maintains that so far as injustice and crime exist on the earth, use of force, violence and even war is inevitable. He supports his view by quoting a Chinese sage Mo-Ti, "A sin cannot be controlled except by punishment and not to punish such a terrible criminal is a sin" (P. 15). As long as we are living in the society, it is our prime and foremost duty to maintain social justice. Says, Prof. K.S. Murty, "Otherwise the strong will oppress the weak and society will be like the world of fish- the big ones eating the small. Danda (Punishment), therefore, is necessary (Page 32). For him social justice is primary and peace or non-violence is secondary. He does not advocate that type of peace or non-violence, which distorts the social justice. Says, he, "absolute tolerance of all wrongs done to oneself is not a virtue (P. 33). He further maintains 'Asceticism and celibacy may be good things but they cannot be so for all men. Science, painting and philosophy are good things but they are also not for all men. Similarly, conquest of anger by non-anger, of unrighteousness by righteousness, of evil by love, may be good things, but all are not capable of

practising them. And it is also important to remember, the Hindu thinkers urge that such behaviour cannot be successful in dealing with all men." (P. 33) Thus, for him one should meet evil with justice and so the tolerance of an evil is not moral at all. 'The Peace, which is achieved on the cost of injustice is not good. Says he, the doctrine of non-injury must be reconciled with the necessity to punish those who deserve it and such a punishment may itself be in tune with the spirit of the doctrine. According to Prof. K.S. Murty, one should not tolerate injustice for the sake of non-violence or disturbance of social peace. Aggressive and unjust wars have been condemned by all the Indian thinkers and they hold that just and defensive wars should be undertaken. Those who disturb social peace and do injustice with our fellow being for the sake of their selfish motive, should be punished. But, he holds, this must be done without giving up *maitri* (friendliness) and *karuṇā* (compassion) (See Prologue Page XXI). Just and defensive wars should be undertaken as a sense of duty and at that time our hearts should be free from malice or ill-will. One should not harbour hatred even towards one's opponent or enemy. So far as Prof. K.S. Murty's view on the above said matter is concerned, it is in confirmity with the ancient thinkers of India. He is thoroughly correct when he comments, "If reverence for life, taken as an absolute value, were stronger than it is, war would decrease very much in frequency and number." (P. 44) But I am not intune with Prof. Murty when he says "Non-injury unless motivated by compassion becomes a superstition and compassion may sometimes lead us to commit injuries to living beings (Page 44)". I am of this view that non-injury or non-violence does not emanate from compassion which is an emotional aspect of our being, but it follows from the faculty of reasoning as a sense of duty. Non-violence should be observed as a sense duty or obligation and not mere as a feeling of compassion. Compassion always has a sense of attachment as its root. Whatsoever is motivated by attachment or mineness is always immoral. If once we accept non-violence as an absolute ethical value based on our faculty of reasoning, we have no right to say that "war is not always immoral" and "Ahimsa does not sum up morality" - as Prof. Murty holds. Though I agree with Prof. K.S. Murty that in our worldly life complete non-violence is not possible, it does not mean that complete non-violence is mere a superstition as he maintains. Those, who are attached to worldly possessions or even to worldly life and have a social obligation to protect other's life and property,

are unable to dispense with defenesive violence. But it must be remembered that violence is always violence and it can never be an ethical virtue. Inevitability of violence in worldly life does not make it ethical or moral. There are certain things in the world which are inevitable or necessary for our life, notwithstanding we can not say all of them as moral. I differ with Prof. Murty's view when he concludes, 'It seems to be silly to admit that all life is equally worthy of reverence (P. 44). In my humble opinion to be worthy of reverence is something different from to be observed perfectly. We cannot challenge the intrinsic value of non-injury or non-violence on the basis of its un-practicability in worldly life. Perfect non-violence, however, is not possible yet it does not mean that it is totally impossible in this world. Those, who are completely detached, even to their body, can observe it perfectly. Prof. Murty's pragmatic equation of morality with practicability and immorality with impracticability is not very desirable because then morality will lead to selfishness.

May be a situation one has to choose between the two violences - Major and Minor instead of violence and non-violence. In such a situation Jaina Ācaryas suggest one should select a minor violence instead of a major one. Prof. K.S. Murty also observes, though man has the obligation to help all living beings, clearly this is impossible and selection had to be made as to whom he should help and whom he may have to injure... when a human life is endangered by disease-carrying germs it seems to be ethically right to preserve it at the cost of the lives of these germs by administration of antibiotics. The use of rat-poison, germicides and disinfectants like DDT to preserve human life seems morally right because human life is qualitatively more valuable than animal life." (P. 44) But in this statement of Prof. Murty I find the usage of some words as objectionable. My first objection is about his use of word 'ethically or morally right'. Here we must be clear in our mind that our selection between two evils or violences does not make a lesser one ethically or morally right. Violence is an evil and it cannot be morally or ethically right in any case. In our worldly life for the sake of our individual interest or even in the interest of human society, in certain situations we have to make a selection between two evils or vices; but on account of our selection, Vices will never be regarded a virtue. Secondly, the human life may be valuable but not in all the cases, so to say, in a desert, a life of a plant is more valuable than human being. Punishments are prescribed for those human beings who

hurt animal life or even plants, in our scriptures as well as civil codes of various nations. Now a days, we have already accepted that the use of germicides and hurting of plant life is not good for ecological balance.

Prof. K.S. Murty's Concept of Peace

The concept of peace has two main aspects, internal as well as external. The internal aspect is known as mental peace or tranquility, it is related mainly to the individuals and that too particularly to their mental state. While the external aspect of peace is known as social-peace and is related to the society mental peace depends on the cessation of conflicts which takes place between our passionate self i.e. Id and ideal-self i.e. super ego. So far as the external or social peace is concerned, it depends on our harmonious living as a member of society. It is the state of cessation of conflicts and wars between individual and society and among different religious and social groups as well as nations.

While dealing with the concept of Peace, in his famous work, 'The Quest for Peace' Prof. K.S. Murty, has emphasised the social or external aspect of peace, but it does not mean that he underestimated the inner peace. He remarks "Not to have hatred towards any one and to harbour no enmity towards any living being, are cardinal virtues, based on the great truth that it is Ātman that is inundate in all beings. Nirvairā is achieved not by cessation of all reaction to evil, but by making the mind and will, pure. Such purity, according to the Gītā, is achieved when one gains inner poise, non-attachment and abandonment of concern with the fruits of actions". (P. 21) He further says "to have no mamata (sense of mine) and ... equanimity in action is the way of obtaining man's highest end." (P. 21)

We must also remember the fact that the external or social peace depends on the inner or mental peace of the members of the society. Society without individuals is something abstract, it is the individual who makes society concrete or real. That is why the inner peace of the individuals is a pre-condition for social peace. A disturbed mind disturbs social peace. In the introduction of Prof. K.S. Murty's book - 'The Quest for Peace' our former Prime Minister and an enlightened statesman Dr. P.V. Narasimharao rightly observes "The Peace and equality should be both inner and outer. There could be no peace outside unless there is inner peace. By inner peace, I do not necessarily mean the individual state of mind attained by sādhanā,

what I mean is that the minds of all men should reach a state where they are free from fear, free from mistrust, free from the urge for self-aggrandisement and exploitation. Today there is an all-pervading war psychosis, because wars begin in the minds of men, and these minds disrupt peace. The same minds need to be oriented to promote peace and this can be done only by a peace-psychosis. (P. XXIX)

Thus, we can conclude that the peace, inner as well as outer, both are worthy to achieve, but stress should be given on inner peace. For inner peace is the cause and outer peace is an effect. But the position of Prof. K.S. Murty is some what different in this regard.

While examining the various theories of the causes of wars, his approach is also realistic. Though he agrees with spiritualists that all wars have their beginning in our minds but at the same time he holds a realistic position and maintains that working of human mind depends on external situations. In the beginning of sixth chapter of this book- 'The Quest for Peace', says, he, "The Unesco constitution says war begins in the mind of men." In as much as all human activity begins in men's minds- for after all without an idea and a will nothing begins- that is an obvious truism. But in so far as men's minds are moulded by their social and cultural environment and by the traditions of their political institutions, we have to seek for the causes of war at the deeper level. You cannot change the working of men's minds, when their civilisation, social organisation and political institutions force them to think and act in certain ways (P. 142)." Thus for him, it is not only men's minds, which are solely responsible for wars and conflicts, but environmental situations also play an important role as a cause of wars and conflicts.

In the sixth chapter of his work, he deals with various theories about the cause of wars and also makes a critical estimate of them. He is not in tune with the various psychological theories which generally hold that war is rooted in human nature. He is also not in agreement with those economists, who hold that population pressures and economic conditions are the sole causes of wars. He does not fully support the tension theory which holds that frustrations create wars. Says he "To conclude whatever the case was in ancient times, modern warfare among great states does not seem to be mainly the effect of tensions either in leaders or in peoples" (P. 161). But to a certain extent he is in tune with Dewey and accepts war as a social

institution or social pattern.

A way out to Peace

At last he opines that war and violence can not be put to an end without a fundamental alteration in social and cultural structure. It is only through awakening of peace consciousness we can change social and cultural pattern and get rid of wars. He observes "Without informed public opinion and good faith a new world order cannot arise and without coming into existence of a unity of outlook and a community of interests among all men (without national and class differences). There can be no world peace (P.182). Prof. K.S. Murty propounds three principles, namely (a) Homonoia-Human brotherhood, (b) Tolerance and (c) Universal Ethics as the bases of peace. Says he, "If a consistent world view could be evolved in consonance with (if not based upon) these three concepts, through the co-operative efforts of the intellectuals of all cultures and if they take pains to make it fashionable among all peoples a universal culture may evolve and make permanent world

peace a possibility." (P. 199) For the cultivation of peace consciousness among peoples, and to make efforts for permanent world peace he suggested to constitute a *Respublica-Litteraria*. It is the duty of the intellectuals to work hard for the awakening of peace consciousness because, says he peace cannot be brought about by fine phrases and nice lectures but by hard work and sacrifice (P. 214).

Peace demands the sacrifice of selfish interests and narrow outlooks as its price. It is only through the consciousness of 'world family' we can establish peace and secure prosperity on the earth.

अयं निजः परो वेति गणना लघुचेतसाम्,
उदारचरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्।

Reference

All the references, in this article are from Prof. K.S. Murty's book 'The Quest for Peace', Ajanta Publications, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi, 1986, page numbers are given in bracket after the quotations.