

The Past is the root of the Present

TIME PAST AND TIME FUTURE, WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN AND WHAT HAS BEEN, POINT TO ONE END, WHICH IS ALWAYS PRESENT

The past is the root of the present whereas the present is the seed of the future; the pastness of the past has its present too. If the present is the culmination of the past, it is also the take-off stage for the future. Obviously all the three have an organic relation whether we take them from the point of view of human life, nature or human institutions. Human life, during its evolutionary course, leaves behind a trail, a beaten path, a tradition, or the tradition which crystallizes itself into the culture of that nation. Otherwise also the abortive efforts of the past make the persons wiser, experienced and better equipped for action; the successful adventures inspire us to do our work enthusiastically. Similarly Nature, as it is, has retained much of ancient character though it has been evolving all through. Nature, in no case, can be considered something amorphous, transient and for the present only. Similarly human institutions of the past and the future have a close relation with the present, for example, religion, which had been dominating not only the life but also the thinking of the people in the past has been reduced to the level of a private affair. There is a possibility that religious outlook, with a greater emphasis on moral virtues, may assume a greater significance. Religion, some think, alone can solve the problems of the world. S. Radhakrishnan once said, "Irreligion is our malady, religion is only cure." The past, the present and the future cannot be studied in a state of isolation.

Some may think that the past and the future have no relevance because one cannot be recalled and the other cannot be correctly anticipated. But it is wrong. The culture of a nation, which is the accumulated wisdom, the resultant of the forces of social change, constitutes the pedestal on which the glory of a nation stands. Without cultural heritage there is no place in the community of nations, no line of thinking and no course of progress. The present is a parasite on the past, it has identity and individuality dependent on the past. The world is evolving international culture, in which national cultures will pool their resources and every national culture will be modified and changed according to the latest developments. That is why, once, Mr. Nehru said, "We must break with much of our past and should not allow it to dominate the present." The past that becomes a monument in memory only, the past that adorns the historical records, is irrelevant for the present. Culture is absorbed by us, during a natural course of

thinking and living; the past that can be of any use in the present is unconsciously adopted by us. Evidently the heritage of the past is meant for building up the present. Traditionalists, like Eliot in literature, also recommend the present of the past.

Some religious 'pundits' attach undue significance to future. The protagonists of such religions, say that the earthly life should be a preparation for a better future. They want to make sacrifices in the present to ensure a better life after death. Salvation and a life free from the cycle of birth and death are the promised gains for sacrificing the present. The rosy future tempts the people to undergo penance and physical tortures. This does not mean that future is not pointing to the present. People may be enchanted by the halo that surrounds those ideas; future is to be judged in the light of the present and we can prepare for it only in the present.

Modern age is marked by the utilitarian outlook; everything is measured in terms of material gain. We neither talk of "art for the sake of art" nor think of the work for the sake of work. Every act is tagged with material interest that is why man's thinking is limited to immediate gain. Humanitarianism, love and many other finer qualities are sacrificed at the altar of immediate gain. Evidently future, to a person with such an attitude, is a world of dreams-uncertain, vague and unborn. Its relevance in the present context of circumstances-how much investment in terms of labour, money, etc., is to be made in the present-is of greater significance. Simple living in the future-transporting one-self imaginatively in the ethereal regions of the future-or in the past-the dead and gone past-is of no avail. Passing our days in the present with the hope to be blessed in the future or with the consolation of have a glorious past is like "feeding on an idle portraiture" or moving on the stilts of airy fancy. The past owes its fame to the present, and future submits to the leather thong of the present, which deals with living and breathing realities.

The present helps us to realise our ambitions, satisfy our ego. Man craves for recognition and his good and commendable work can win laurels for him immediately. Those, who cater to the demands of the present, provide their mettle because idealists working for the future never get immediate praise. That is why genius is never respected in society; Copernicus was burnt alive, Socrates was compelled to take poison and Gandhiji was shot dead. A common man cannot raise the stature of his mind to the level of one, that thinks of the future in the present.

The sub-conscious and the unconscious mind of man serve the urgent claims of the present. The memories and dreams form such an amalgam that it is difficult

to disengage them. But they are always dictated and conditioned by the present. The immediate environment, pressing hard on the mind of a person, can never allow the withered, though treasured up, memories of the past to assert themselves. They become subordinate to our passion for the present.

The past provides experience and ideals. Essentially the human nature remains the same so the wisdom that filters through the experience of the past can help us to tackle the situations in the present. Situations are also the same, history repeats itself though with minor changes. The trials, the efforts, the failures, the triumphs of the past can easily and profitably be used for the present day. So is the case with the ideals which future inspires. We work for those ideals in the present though they may yield results only in the remote future.

The past is judged by the present and the future is conceived in the present. We may boast of our glorious past but those will be reminiscences and they may generate either frustration or inactivity. It is the present mirth and present laughter (there is nothing here and after) are the touchstones of our success. People, around us, cannot be transported into the visions of the past because their senses are more powerful than their imagination. Similarly whatever we lack today, whatever is missing in our life appears in ideals. Man may follow knowledge like a sinking star but everything is based upon the situations available in the present. The havoc wrought by the World War I gave birth to the League of Nations because its urgency was felt by the experiences of those times. Second World War brought greater disaster and so a bit stronger world organisation U.N.O., was brought into being.

The past, the present and future constitute the rhythm of life; unheard melodies of the past and the future are sweeter than the heard ones of the present. Still the present throws the challenges of its harsh realities and riddles whereas past may be lurking behind like shadow and the future with its glare may shine ahead. Till the challenges are accepted and overcome, the shadow cannot be recognised and the glare will be meaningless. The past survives for the present and the future is conceived for today. Achievements and failures of the past are carried on to the present, which in itself serves as the basis of future.