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RESEARCH ARTICLE

GOOD LIFE –WHAT AND WHY

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Abstract

Concept of Good life is one of the fundamental concepts of all philosophical as well as moral investigations. The emergence of human being as a self-conscious, moral, social and rational agent has reflected strongly on his ultimate end of life which is termed as good life. With an impartial outlook I made an effort to give some views on good life in the ethico-social context and try to reconstruct a comprehensive relationship between the various components of good life already existing and to draw a holistic framework of good life. Under the changing conditions in the societies past and present, how good life moulds and these modifications have been absorbed by the societies that query needs to be addressed.

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Introduction:-

In the present time, scientific and technological achievement in different fields influenced our lives immensely and we are confused with the material gains in every walk of life. Sometimes we are puzzled with the so-called progress, development which is made possible by the technological advancement and whether these rapid social changes ultimately lead to peace and happiness in the world or not. Because it create insecurities in all spheres of life and also neglect the spiritual and religious values. In such moment it is very necessary to discuss what actually good life is. Is it material comfort or spiritual development or both? Good life implies all round development of individual living in societies.

Methodology:-

In the present study, the philosophical problem has been observed in a descriptive manner. The existing some views on good life have been interpreted and evaluated to derive a synthetic over all view on the main characteristics and its different components. To work out the details, the original books and literature are used as primary source of data and other reliable and suitable information collected from articles, journals, notes are treated as secondary data source. By analyzing the primary and secondary data sources, I seek to find out answers to questions through existing knowledge on the problem in a causal comparative approach.

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Analysis

Concept of Good life is the fundamental concept of all philosophical as well as moral investigations. The emergence of human being as a self-conscious, moral, social and rational agent has reflected strongly on his ultimate end of life which is termed as good life. The literal meaning of good life is a life well lived, the most desirable way to live. Every human being always seeks the answer of one question "On what ground we should be moral?" The answer will be to lead happy life. It signifies the following questions: "How should we live? What are our wants? What should we want? What are the enjoyable things? Which are most the most enjoyable things? For what purpose we can do worth working? And for what we cannot do worth the working? What is acceptable for us and why we should try to change and how can we change?" Different Ethical thinkers try to give the answer of these questions which are the core of morality. The main purpose of moral philosophy is to develop a collection of principles and views of our highest end of life which will allow us to live with clarity and confidence. Good life provides us the reasons and logical argument for accepting moral principles and rules. It includes all aspects of human life by which we can make our life meaningful, enjoyable, duty bound. It also helps to become industrious and struggle in the midst of disparity of life and to create a new world order by changing the social structure for betterment. It is an impulse of life which satisfies our cravings of being moral.

The concept of good life itself is a very multiplex one. It is a very difficult concept to define. Existence of Good life will be meaningless without society because man is primarily a society bound rational animal. Good life is a consistent and organized moral concept which implies all-inclusive perfection of an individual as a religious, political, economic, rational and spiritual being in spite of social being. So good life can be measured in terms of all round development of these aspects of an individual. It is the harmonious wellbeing of an individual as a social being. Moral life of an individual is mainly concerned with the relations between men, his conduct towards the fellow being in agreement with the rules and regulations which governs the human relation to develop a society. The individual life and the social life cannot be separated from each other because the interest and claims of these two lives are reciprocally inclusive. So the good life of an individual cannot be looked in isolation from the society. Society is a bundle of individuals. It is the systems through which individual's own life either it is moral or religious or spiritual is expressed. Therefore development of society depends upon the all round development of the individuals. When an individual is able to attain perfection what is his actual aim, then he obtains the state of highest good and that is the summum bonum of life and this can be called the good life. In simply good life is the ultimate moral standard and ideals of actions.

Moral Philosophy consists with our general quest which includes not only morality but also the search for the good life. So the concept of good life cannot be explained without the analysis of moral philosophy. Good life implies the happy life which is based on the right principles of our actions. Good life is a life of descent living, it is the most prudent way to live.

As man is a social animal so his moral life is associated with the society. So the good life of man must be the fulfillment of moral principles in leading a life in society. Morality assumes that men have certain aims, purposes and desires which they wish to achieve, fulfill and satisfy. The achievement of these aims is variously called the good life or the Good for Man or Happiness and joy. Good life is the Ideal of life. It is the end in itself. It is the ultimate end of human activities.

On the philosophical level values are generally be graded as natural, social and spiritual. If we try to express all values of natural life in one word it will be happiness so also all values of social life can be expressed as 'justice' and one word for expressing all the spiritual values is 'perfection'. These three are the three aspects of human life. Since the good life centers round all these three aspects of life, so attainment of happiness, justice and perfection can be regarded as essential ways of leading a good life. Values are important because it is one of the leading trends of philosophical thinking and also it forms the cultural pattern of a society. In the middle age philosophers remark that a morally perfect being is one who has all positive knowledge and whose have perfect harmony and he is truth, beauty and goodness. Truth, beauty and goodness are not only ideals of life but also the intrinsic values of life and these three indicates three aspects of life i.e. thinking feeling and willing. Truth is regarded as the ideal of knowledge, beauty is the ideal of feeling and good is the ideal of willing. So the good life is the realization of all these three aspects of human life in a coordinated way. These three are also regarded as the value of coherence, harmony and moral perfection respectively. Good life is one of the leading concepts of moral philosophy which is blended with different regulative features of morality.

In Indian Ethics there are four fold aims of life which are called together 'Purusarthas' (which consists of two words: 'puru' means self and 'artha' means purpose or goal i.e. attainment of goal) which are the ideals for man. They are: *dharma* which implies moral values, *artha* which implies politico-economic values, *Kama* implies hedonistic values and *moksa* which implies spiritual values of life. Purusarthas can be regarded as the representation of Indian concept of values. Indian thinkers are not satisfied only with the fulfillment of man's intellectual curiosity; it is also concerned with the search for ultimate values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness through its science of Reality. 'By Indian Ethics I mean the ethical views expounded in the entire philosophical, religious, cultural tradition represented by the Vedas, Upanishad, Buddhism----'.*1 The goal of Indian ethics is self-realization which is the state of awakening and consciousness of Atman. The attainment of such goal is not merely ideal but also attainable in the empirical life. Self-realization from the Indian standpoint is an actual state of human existence. The man who attains self-realization is called 'Jivanmukta'; it provides the individual complete freedom. This is the state of sthitaprajnata of Gita, Nirjara of Jainism and levels of Bodhisattva of Buddhism. Indian ethics may be termed as spiritual utilitarianism which means integrated development of human personality through the unfoldment of man's 'Atman'. Atman implies the core of human personality, the truth of truths (satyasya satyam) and the centre of centres (Kendrasya kendram) in man."*2 This view is also accepted by western perfectionist.

In the Upanishad we find that 'the essence of good life constitutes with the dama, dana and daya (da, da, da). These three are the essentials of good life. 'Dama' means self-control, restraint which is the mark of a human being. In the Ramayana, when Lakshmana sets out for the forest his mother tells him, Look upon Rama as your father Dasaratha, look upon Sita as myself as your mother, look upon the forest as Ayodhya, go my dear'*3.

One of the most important Indian scripture Gita remarks that to lead a good life one must have to follow the path of Niskama Karma yoga in which knowledge, devotion and action are synthesized in an integrated way because in this state one is able to attain the highest culmination of thinking feeling and willing. In other words the person who has intellectual capacity, feeling of emotion and the power to do anything is capable of attaining the stage of *Nishkama karma yoga*. Therefore it is said that when a person would be able to satisfy his mind by fulfilling the activities of all sphere of life, he is capable to lead a good life which is also found in Gita and then he is regarded as Shitaprajna. According to Buddha, for leading a good life real knowledge, good conduct and concentration are essential. For Buddha the ultimate end of human life is to attain *Nirvana* and it can be attained through the fulfillment of these three ways which are included in the eight fold path of Buddhism. These eight paths are right views, right efforts right conduct, right resolve, right mindfulness, right livelihood and right concentration.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was the follower of Buddhism and he describes the concept of good life in the same manner of Buddhism. For him, good life is one which is devoted to safeguard and inculcate the principles of liberty, equality and enlighten amongst the people and develops the values of love, brotherhood and real knowledge.

There are some qualities which are essential to lead a good life such as knowledge, kindness, courage, love, trust, inspiration, reason, fearless outlook, broad mind and open-heart. It also needs favorable social condition, political and economic situation of the society.

Contemporary Indian thinkers also give their own views regarding the good life. According to M.K. Gandhi, realization of God is the ultimate end of human life. He says that good life is a life based on the code of *Ahimsa* that is love and Truth that is service to God. Two basic components are essential to lead a good life – one is self-sacrificel or self-restraint and other is self-control. These can be attained through the rigorous performance of duty and by these man is able to go nearer to the Ultimate Reality which is Divine. Since God exist in the heart of every human being, so the realization of God can be attained through the love of other and the performing the duties towards other.

S. Radhakrishnan uses the term '*Sarvamukti*' as the highest end of human life. It implies not only the mukti of individual human being accepted by Indian thinkers, but also the mukti of humanity as a whole. For the mukti of humanity as a whole moral progress of the whole race is necessary. For Radhakrishnan, the ultimate end of human life is the spiritual self-realization which transcends the ethical level. He was not the follower of the traditional morality, but in innovative good life which consists of perfect knowledge, universal love and fulfilment of will. For this, man must have supernatural vision and perfect self-integration which are inherent in the mind of every individual.

Thus Radhakrishnan concludes that good life implies spiritual self-realization and this can be attained through integral and constitutive experience.

Thus we find different views regarding the concept of Good life

It is a fact that Individual life and social life are inseparable. Good of the individual depends upon the good of the society and vice versa. Regarding the question whether the good of the society is a means for achieving its goal or it is an end in itself? Many ethical thinkers who mainly believe in the greater good of the society, believe that not only the good of the society is quite often in its end itself, the society itself quest for the good which is not only universally good, the epitome of the goodness, but something that must be the essence of life and the ultimate reality of life too. Like Indian thinkers it can be said that '*Satyam Sivam Sundaram*'. That is, what is Truth is Universal Reality and what is Reality is also Beauty. On the other hand, it suggests that, Reality itself is goodness which is eternally beautiful and true. This is the highest end of individual as well as the society which can be termed as good life. As primary aspect of society, man and morality are not only complementary to each other, but integral to each other's unity. They create independency as a result of which human reality make progress on earth. Due to the change of time though human ethics has turned into a complex system, its roots are based on natural values only. Development of society depends upon the development of individual and his attitude towards morality. Through the moral progress of both the individual and society the concept of good life finds its culmination. In all Indian literature of ethics and all the major religious books are based on intrinsic values of ethics. The books of Hindu Religion lay emphasis upon 'duty' as the iconic emblem of their rules of life. From this standpoint also good life is a very much essential concept.

The present day situation creates suspicion, hatred, and dissatisfaction amongst the people and for this they have to spend their life in a position which is devoid of mental peace. Development of mental peace is very much essential for the proper nourishment of leading a good life. Such global problem can be solved only by the unity of whole human race by agreed principle of co-existence, co-operation, compromise and mutual understanding. It requires only the efforts of development of the creative expression of their own field. Imposition and dominating attitude towards other culture should be discouraged for it. The unity of culture which is the key word for the survival of humanity must be based on harmony and integration. Good life is one of the ways of awareness of this present global crises and modification of human activities. To preserve social harmony, morality and moral codes are very necessary within the social set up. Good life which is an organized moral concept is very much essential for this purpose. Because the aim of life is not only concerned with the creation of the Heaven on Earth, but it also concerned with the attainment of higher and extreme form of consciousness. This truth is found in the image of Lord Siva, Buddha and other saints and from this it is clear that man must have a highest good which is contemplation, freedom and peace of understanding. Morality is a stepping stone. So the action which is done with no selfish interest but in the dedication to society purifies the mind. Since man's life is a network of intimate relations of attraction and repulsions from which he cannot differentiates him. The need for the concept of good life arises due to the environment where individual lives amongst a host of things which we judge as intrinsically or extrinsically good. On moral priorities we can grade them as higher or lower. Explanation of good life also arises for the sake of moral assertion which includes evaluation, prescriptions, criticism and injunction concerning others and ourselves. Real worth of a nation is individual in and through which nation expresses its development. So, universal harmony and peace ultimately depends on the growth and development of individual. Welfare of the individual leads to the welfare of the society and so also welfare of the society leads to welfare of the state or nation. So welfare of the individual, i.e. good life is regarded as the foundational pillar of world peace.

Conclusion:-

With the course of history, moral codes of a society get distorted and lose their original significance and our society is no exception to this. Man is not only psycho-physical being, man is at the same time both religious and spiritual being. Good life is the attainment of perfection or complete self-realization. Real nature of man is spiritual, so self-realization is the realization to the divinity. Morality is one of the means to apprehend the Reality. Ethics is not merely a science of conduct; rather it is the science of good and the art of realizing it. But this goodness is not to be confused with temporal well-being or physical well-being, it is spiritual well-being. Man has to work not only for his own individual liberation, but for the upliftment and all round development of his society and nation and for human race as a whole. All round development i.e. good life will be possible firstly by purifying one's own self and desire. Only physical pleasure or only spiritual pleasure is unable to give the

uttermost satisfaction which is termed as good life. Now-a-days, the Global ethics requires such an assimilation where east and west, ancient and modern, spiritual and material values go into hand in hand. The life which has the spiritual consciousness of humanity, which is based on love, sacrifice, service, self-control, justice, and above all devotion to truth and righteousness, can be regarded as good life. Moreover without mental peace, no life is able to lead a good life, although it is physically, economically well equipped.

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