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NIETZSCHE'S WILL TO POWER

Mayuri Barman¹

Towards the close of the nineteenth century a voice of iconoclast, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was heard. He was a philosopher as well as psychologist who represents a major historical event. His ideas have had repercussion in recent history and literature as well as in psychology and religious thought. He has been assigned a great place in the grand tradition of western thought and his fame has spread like wildfire. He sought to counter the positivistic challenges from across the channel by developing a new picture of human dignity. His mission is to sweep away the shibboleths behind which waster man had been sheltering. Therefore, the total independence and isolation of free man is found for the first time in Nietzsche.

"Philosophy is the tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual will to power, 'to creation of the world', to cause prima". Thus, the central idea in Nietzsche's philosophy is expressed by his phrase 'The will to power'. According to Nietzsche's the basic drive that prompted the development of Greek culture might well have been the will to power. In Zarathustra's initial proclamation the culture of Greece is explicitly referred to and explained in terms of the will to power. Power in Greek thought is described in Nietzsche in terms of Apollo and Dionysus. Thus, Apolline and Dionysiac power are considered as "artistic power which spring from nature itself, without the mediation of human artist,"

In Nietzsche's interpretation of human nature, will to power is the chief factor in man's evolutionary struggle. It is the motive force behind all life - 'only where there is life is there will. not will to life but ... will to power'.

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Importance of Nietzsche:

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) the distinguished German thinker was a philosopher as well as psychologist who more than other philosopher of the past hundred years represents a major historical event. His ideas are of concern not only to the members of one nation or community, nor alone to philosopher, but to men everywhere. Nietzsche's ideas have had repercussions in recent history and literature as well as in psychology and religious thought. He has been assigned a great place in the grand tradition of western thought and his fame has spread like wildfire. He sought to counter the positivistic challenge from across the channel by developing a new picture of human dignity. According to Nietzsche one must consider many perspectives and a philosopher should not imprison his thought in one system. System says Nietzsche, are good in so far as they reveal the character of a great thinker but this goodness must be independent of the truth of the system. These basic assumptions gave expression to the mental make-up of the philosopher. Many philosophers were impressed by Nietzsche's idea that instead of deducing a system from accepted premises one must engage in the pursuit of independent problems and showing them to their astonishment what they had presumed in formulating their problem.

Nietzsche, unlike Aristotle, Aquinas and Hegel, did not mark the culmination and conclusion of a long development as it were, a great harvest. Rather he marks the beginning of a new period. He succeeded in fashioning a coherent and noteworthy philosophy that may well surpass the system of his successors in breadth, depth and originality. Nietzsche's writing provides a brilliant commentary to all the phases of the history of culture. His writings have created the most scholarly and intellectual culture that modern Europe has ever known. His mastership, the massive strength of his thought has a consistent point of view, is forever setting out on new beginnings.

"Philosophy is the tyrannical drive itself the most spiritual will to power, creation of the world", to cause prima ².

The will to power is the fundamental principle of human nature. This principle is capable of justifying existence in general and life in particular. It is the reality behind all things. The desire to become powerful is extremely natural everywhere in nature and society. It is the sole duty of mankind. Power can extend from the minimum to the maximum. The different powers are at different levels. Animals are more powerful than material or lifeless things but intellectual power is superior to animal power due to which man is more powerful than animal.

Nietzsche's philosophy of power is inextricably linked to the tradition of Plato, Spinoza, etc. All these great thinkers were roused by human tragedy but did not condemn man to eternal suffering. They raised their voices against the cult of guilt, panic, despair and all pervading evasion.

Plato called this creative energy -Eros -which manifests itself from its lowest form of biological satisfaction to spiritual creation. Platonic Eros is, therefore, "wholly telic, goal directed, and moves towards the more than nature"³ According to Plato, there are different levels of the soul when they reach the divine level are knit together by a conative urge and merged into one which is called reason. This urge is called by Plato "Eros". Thus, the essential mark and internal motive force of soul according to Plato, is Eros.

For Spinoza, man as a finite being a part of nature. His nature is not to be explained by appealing to mystical or supernatural influences. According to Spinoza, there is one basic endeavour of all things which is called conatus. This is expressed by saying that "everything, in so far as it lies in itself endeavours to persist in its own being"⁴. In man too, this

2. Nietzsche, Beyond Good & Evil Pp: 16

3. Morgan, Love: Plato, the Bible & Freud Pp: 165

4. Spinoza, Ethics iii Prop: 6

is such striving (appetites) to preserve his existence. Pleasure and pain are functions of conatus towards the desired goal.

As the nineteenth century drawing to its close, a voice of an iconoclast was heard. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) declared himself the destroyer of old value to clear the way for the virtues of strength against weakness, health against decadence and freedom of spirit against slave morality. Nietzsche confronts the basic problems about happiness and enquires where a new goal can be found that will give an aim to human life. These difficulties are removed in his early works where no will to power stamps the understanding. Still Nietzsche encounters similar problems and was able to solve them by temporarily abandoning his ambitious project and turned to psychological enquiries where he discovered the will to power by bold induction. Thus, the central idea in Nietzsche's philosophy is expressed by his phrase "The will to power" which is the innermost essence of all being. Nietzsche's will to power is the gateway to Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche approached the conception of a will to power from two distinct points of view. First, he thought of it as a craving for worldly success, which he repudiated as harmful to man's interest in perfecting himself. Secondly, he thought of the will to power as a psychological drive in terms of which many diverse phenomena could be explained, eg, gratitude, pity and self-abasement.

According to Nietzsche, the basic drive that prompted the development of Greek culture might well have been the will to power. He notes that the Greeks preferred power to anything "useful" and even to a good reputation. This sudden association of the will to power with the Greeks was one of the most decisive steps in the development of this conception into an all embracing monism. In Zarathustra's initial proclamation, the culture of Greece is explicitly referred to and explained in terms of the will to power. Power in Greek thought is described by Nietzsche in terms of Apollo and Dionysus. The key conceptions of the Birth of tragedy are the Apollonian and Dionysian. Nietzsche at first favours Apollo, the God of beauty which was able to control the destructive diseases, to

harness the Dionysian flood and to use it creatively. But in his later writings he celebrated Dionysus who is no longer the deity of formless frenzy which is found at first. Only the name remains, but later the Dionysian represents passion controlled.

Thus Apolline and Dionysiac powers are considered as "artistic powers which spring from nature itself, without the meditation of human artist"⁵. Their artistic power of the whole of nature reveals itself to the supreme gratification. The will to power is not only the devil who diverts man from achieving culture but it is envisaged as the basis of Greek culture, which Nietzsche then considered the acme of humanity. Instead of being associated primarily with neurotics who crave pity, with modern man's lust for money, the will to power is now envisaged as the basic drive of all human efforts. In Zarathustra Nietzsche explains that will to power is proclaimed as the basic force underlying all human activities.

In Nietzsche's interpretation of human nature the will to power is the chief factor in man's evolutionary struggle. It is the motive force behind all life, from the animal upwards and every instinct is the expression of it, disguised or otherwise. "Wherever I found a living creature, there found I the will of power"⁶. As the lesser surrenders himself to the greater, similarly the greatest surrenders himself and stakes life for the sake of power. It is the surrender of the greatest to run risk and danger. And where there is sacrifice and service, there also is the will to be master. "Even in the will of the servant found I the will to be master"⁷. Moreover, it is also the will to power which enforces obedience within a relation. "Wherever I found living things, there heard I also the language of obedience. All living things are obeying things"⁸.

Nietzsche's philosophy of power entails the repudiation of the pleasure principle as moral standard. There is a sense in which it is found

5. Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, Ch-2 Pp:18.

6. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Pp:112.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

that all men desire pleasure or happiness . But according to Nietzsche , "men feel a life devoted to the pursuit of power to be more satisfactory human life than a life devoted to the pursuit of happiness ⁹". Happiness " is in other words "elastic " and man can enjoy this feeling in a great number of different ways which is also conceivable that power gives them the greatest possible degree of it . "Happiness" has at least two different meanings: first, a man's happiness consists in the state he desires and secondly, happiness may be something more specific that possibly is not desired by all men. Thus, according to Nietzsche, all men do not seek pleasure and as a matter of fact their happiness consists in the possession of power.

Nietzsche opposes Darwin's conception of " struggle for existence" " Darwin's, 'struggle for existence ' gives way to the struggle for power. According to Nietzsche, the struggle for existence would be meaningless, unless there is a desire for existence, an active will to exist. This will to exist is really a will to dominate. The power does not mean domination over others, but can be achieved in creative activity. A man according to Nietzsche in order to exist has to become daring. Thus, man's will to live, becomes the will to power which is identical to the will to live. According to Nietzsche, "only where there is life is there will: not will to life but Will to power ¹⁰"

An adequate appraisal of Nietzsche's concept of man is possible only within the framework of his total philosophical perspective. Genuine philosophy for Nietzsche is a critical and creative enterprise. Nietzsche's genuine philosopher can never say , ' No ' to life . Indeed acceptance of life in its totality (amor fati) is the zenith of philosophical excellence in his view. For an adequate understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy it is necessary to ascertain the role that the will to power plays as an explanatory principle. Nietzsche conceived man as suffering from being caught between his false morality and his deep seated animal instincts. In order to resolve these conflicts, man must cast off all established values. He must break the old

9. Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Anarchist , Pp:258

10. Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, Pp: 113

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tables of law so that new tables with new values can be set up. He believes that the ancient ideals can be improved and achieved the stage of superman. Superman is neither master nor slave but beyond good and evil, who would have new values as direct manifestations of the will to power.

For Nietzsche, man is fallen and is in need of redemption and he is convinced that man must be overcome: "Man who has overcome himself become overman"¹¹.

He must overcome limits without involving a non-human power. According to Nietzsche "man is a rope stretched between beast and overman - a rope over an abyss"¹². Nietzsche's superman is not a science fiction hero. Instead he is rather "your true self which does not lie deeply concealed within you but immeasurably high over you"¹³. According to Nietzsche "The superman is the meaning of the earth"¹⁴. He recognized Superman in the form of powerful people - the ideal is "the Roman Caesar with the Christ's soul".

Just as morality lies not in kindness but in strength, so the goal of human effort should not be elevation of all but the development of finer and stronger individuals. "Not mankind but Superman is the goal"¹⁵. Thus, the aim of mankind is the evolution not that of the common man, but of the superman. The superman is not a completed ideal type but a process, never reaching an end state and is in fact the only medium in which authentic freedom can survive.

11. Kaufmann, Ibid, pg :309

12. Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, 4 Prologue

13. Kaufmann, Ibid: 308

14. Nietzsche, Ibid. 1. Prologue

15. Kaufmann, Ibid

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