

Evolution a Necessity in Vedant Philosophy

I do not want to quarrel with Mr. Verma's religious views (or should they be called irreligious?), because religion like politics is a subject, to dabble in which every one thinks is his birth right, howsoever little he might have studied it or things of the mind or soul, but Mr Verma's viewpoint that evolution is a necessity to Vedant philosophy needs to be exploded.

The theory of Evolution, as propounded by Darwin, seeks to explore through what physical stages the different species that we see today or that have become extinct, have passed during the whole course of the existence of animal life on this planet. According to this theory, the ancestor of the present man, as maintained by Darwin in his 'The Descent of Man', was the ape. From this it is clear beyond a shadow of doubt that the theory of evolution concerns itself with changing life-forms in the physical realm because of changing environments; but it has nothing to say about soul, the only certainty in the midst of this wilderness of uncertainties.

On the other hand, Vedant is the philosophy of the sojourn of soul in this world. It holds that the different physical forms are the abodes of the soul, and one soul can, till it merges into Godhead, occupy different abodes according to the law of retribution. According to this view the soul of a man might have, during his prenatal time, entered the body of an ape, but it is illogical to think that his ancestor was an ape.

It thus becomes crystal clear that the theory of evolution and the theory of transmigration of soul in Vedanta have no likeness; but they are poles asunder: one seeks to explain the physical aspect of life, and the other its spiritual aspect. To call evolution a necessity in Vedant philosophy is a fallacy which logicians call 'idola theatri.'

I know of a religion, whose head, while crusading for the liberation of a socially, morally, mentally and politically suppressed people received a complaint from his adherents that one of their number was rendering first aid to their enemies who fell down wounded on the field of battle. When the 'culprit' was brought to him for punishment, the religious head patted him on the back, blessed his action and gave him a supply of medicines and told him to go on with his commendable work! Will you call this persecution and intolerance of religion or its humanism?(Nairobi, 5 September 1960)