



Philosophical ideas of Ramananda and Kabir on humanistic values and ethics

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Abstract

The Indian brand of humanistic values and ethics coming from the ancient Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita. This will be further clear by the analysis of the Neo-Vedanta trend in contemporary Indian philosophy. While fundamentally, there is no essential difference between the Western and Indian values, the later is represented by the traditionalist group of Indian philosophers. There-fore, it is their values which form the essential element of Indian philosophy. The existence of relationship between God and devotee is not of now it is there since the Vedic times i.e. about 5000 years ago. This relationship is considered to be devotional.

Keywords: humanistic, devotional, synchronization, values, ethics & prejudices

Introduction

The Bhakti Movement is remarkable of its kind for the religious unity and for the emancipation of poverty. They have advocated equality between men and women. They have condemned idol worship. They condemned the social evils like casteism and Sati. They have preached the oneness of God.

Bhakti has proved attractive over a period of two thousand years as the devotional path brought together feelings and forms easily recognizable, generally acceptable and nearly pleasurable. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says that the Bhakti is the means to achieve deliverance.

In our country from the time of the Rig-Veda down to our own days a long line of torch bearers who stress the primacy of spiritual values, who point out that even as the human being is above the animal, the spiritual man is above the human. The exponents of pure abstract assumption find their way into the minds of men through song and poetry. The attainment of life in God is achieved more easily by Bhakti than by other means. The poets, singers and saints with their ardent devotion to the ideals of beauty, synchronization, freedom, and ambition have had the strongest impact on society.

The doctrine that all men both high and low are equal before God has become the central idea that has rallied large sections of the masses to fight against the priesthood and caste autocracy. This great movement of the middle Ages has not only helped the development of a combination Indian culture embracing different linguistic and religious communities but also paved the way for united struggle against feudal oppression. The Bhakti movement has attained varying degrees of intensity sweeping in different parts of the country. It appeared in a variety of forms also. Yet, some basic principles inspire the movement as a whole.

Philosophical ideas of Ramananda

The movement which Ramanuja started in South India was

spread to the other parts of Northern India by his great disciple Ramananda. His concept of God is that he is a person who cares for all men and rewards their devotion. Ramananda brought a radical reform. He made no distinction between Brahmanas and members of the dishonored castes. He wanted to promote the ideal of inter-dining. Another reform of Ramananda was the use of the vernaculars for the propagation of the new creed. He was the founder of a new school of thought. He took people as disciples from all the castes including the degraded castes^[1].

The mystics are considered to be saints who believe that God can be realized in a process of self-culture. God is conceived as a being with many human attributes. The relation of man with God is similar to that of a master to his servant or a lover to the beloved^[2]. The important feature of these mystic saints was stated to be the spirit of religious tolerance. Religion is a question of individual loom to God without the necessity of any outside interference. Both the Muslims and Hindus are equal and they are the children of the only true God. Nevertheless the mystics were fearless in pointing out the defects in the belief of both Hindus and Muslims. They fought against casteism and idolization of the Hindus and Muslims. George Kotturan writes:

There had been a process of acculturation of Hindu and Muslim in India since a long time. Islamic contact with India made people closer to the outside India which gave rise to new social and religious thinking and opened a new vista of knowledge. Indian people were ready to welcome new ideas and incorporate new ways.

The Hindu society woke up to reform itself^[3].

The ideal of Islamic brotherhood exerted profound influence on Hindu social thinking. Islam treats all men equal which was in disregard to caste in the new development of *Bhakti* philosophy. The mystics held that in the sight of God there

was no difference between a high caste Brahmin and an outcaste. The love of God is universal. The whole universe is tied up in brotherhood. This practical ideology owes its existence due to the fusion of Hindu and Islamic teachings. Ramananda started a religious revitalization: "He ably guided the spiritual life of the Indian people and introduced social and religious reforms. He recognized no difference of caste and creed. According to him all men and women are equal" [4].

He insisted upon correct moral conduct and a life dedicated to virtue and charity. He had Muslims and Hindus as his followers. In the matter of caste he was indifferent. He had Sudras – the outcaste or untouchables as his disciples. The charismatic personality of Ramananda attracted thousands of people as selfless disciples. He said that God is Omnipresent. The celestial energy envelops the whole universe. God revealed to him that he is in his heart. God filled the entire universe with his presence.

Philosophical ideas of Kabir

Kabir is a constructive reformer. He has founded a Panth or a sect. The followers of Kabir sect are to be found principally among lower Castes [5]. Freedom from egoism and self-seeking is of prime importance. If there is a little in the way of social philosophy, there would be a negation of the unacquainted distinctions that India has kept man from man [6]. Kabir has refused to concede any caste distinctions. He claimed social equality for the low caste Śūdrās with the other castes. In the Indian literature the unreality of these caste distinctions has not clearly been mentioned. In the writings of Kabir, he says:

It is but folly to ask what the caste of a saint may be. The barber has sought God, the washer-woman and the carpenter. Even Ravidas was a seeker after God. The R̥ṣi Swapacha was a tanner by caste. Hindus and Muslims alike have achieved that End, where remains no mark of distinction [7].

Kabir denounces what is ridiculous and inhuman in the division of society into castes. He says:

If you reflect on the origin of castes they came into being from one and the same How it is that one is born. Sudra, and remains Sudra till his death One makes a Brahma is thread one and then puts it on. The world is thus in confusion. If thou art a Brahmin, born of a Brahmin, why art thou not born in a different fashion If you milk a black cow and white cow and then mix their milk, will you be able to distinguish the milk of one from the other [8].

In another context we find Kabir watching the wife of a gardener, who gathered flowers to offer them to an idol. He said to her:

In the petals of the flower, dwells the soul of vegetation, and the idols to which you are going to make you're offering is lifeless. The vegetal condition is better than the mineral conditions. The idol to which you are going to offer flowers has neither feeling nor life [9].

Kabir treasured wish was to abolish the caste system and the aggression of religion based on blind superstition or on the selfish interest of a minor group of people exploiting the ignorance of others. His desire was to establish peace in social and religious spheres among the people and unite them for they were separated one from the other on the grounds of religion. The *Bhakti* movement has preached human equality and openly damned rituals and caste prejudices. It is drastically new and basically different from the old traditional traditions and ideas of religious authority. It seeks to refashion the collective life on the new lines upholding the values of justice and equality for all people in the society.

Kabir holds very strongly the principle of non-violence and treats it as sinful if life in any form is injured or taken away [10]. Kabir preaches for the harmony, love, understanding of Hindus and Muslims. He declares the equality of all men recognizing no banners of caste or creed and peaceful co-existence. His concept of non-violent society is indicative of a peaceful society living in virtue and goodness. He has set before the world an idea of love and universal brotherhood. As the love of God prevails in the world, the love of one's neighbor should triumph amongst men. An often quoted saying of Kabir is:

That body in which love does not dwell is a crematorium;
the heart which is without love is like a blacksmith's
bellows, breathing but lifeless [11].

Kabir demands the moral purity and does not restrict it to one particular kind of life. Obedience to the master to his commands must not be blind. The believer has to rely on his reason and follow according to the details of his conscience [12].

Conclusion

The canon that all men both high and low are equal before God has become the central idea that has rallied large sections of the masses to fight against the priesthood and caste tyranny. This great movement of the middle Ages has not only helped the improvement of an amalgam Indian culture taking up different linguistic and religious communities but also paved the way for united struggle against feudal repression. The main aim of the teaching of Kabir was to find an excellent means to determine the differences between mixed castes and religious communities. Kabir preaches for the harmony, love, understanding of Hindus and Muslims. He declares the equality of all men recognizing no banners of caste or creed and peaceful co-existence. His concept of non-violent society is indicative of a peaceful community living in virtue and goodness. He has set before the world an idea of love and universal brotherhood. He seems to have realized the fact that any kind of tenets, dogmas, precepts, principles and cult are counterproductive as far as true devotion is concerned as all these things breed dogmatism and fanaticism, which ultimately do not allow humankind to see the truth as it is. That is why, probably, many of his poems appear to urge to discard creeds and beliefs that embrace without any rational thinking. He seems to have never encouraged blind following of his sermon. He rather encouraged people to examine and reexamine everything in the light of consciousness. His

devotion looks to be not a blind devotion born of an impulse. Rather it seems to be an application of his belief in logic and evidence. The researcher holds that He mocks at the prevalent ritual of chanting God's name on beads, in spite of the fact that in Hindu and Muslim religions chanting God's name is believed to liberate one from suffering of this life Ramananda brought a radical reform. He made no distinction between Brahmanas and members of the dishonored castes. Another reform of Ramananda was the use of the vernaculars for the propagation of the new creed. He was the founder of a new school of thought. He took people as disciples from all the castes including the degraded castes.

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