

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS OF VETHATHRI MAHARISHI: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The Modern Man is experiencing a sense of helplessness and uncertainty due to personal, societal and environmental challenges that do not seem to have any long lasting solutions in sight. The modern life style is a reflection of the imbalance that stems from the domination of science and technology. There is an urgency to balance our materialistic lives with spiritual practices that are practical and effective. At that such times, there needs great people to born and address them with the masses and give practical solutions. Vethathirian life and his teachings are comprehensive path that offers an integrated way of life to get in touch with the world around. Knowing his life certainly helps one to understand how Vethathiri weaves through self, society and nature to offer a healthy, harmonious and productive way of living.

KEYWORDS: Vethathiri Maharishi, Modern Philosophy, Value Education

INTRODUCTION

It is a historical fact that nobleman have a humble beginning. Many great people have lived on earth, realized the Truth, lived in solitary bliss, and never felt compelled to transfer their wisdom to the contemporary society. They were saints of one kind. There is another kind: they realized the Truth, became free from ignorance, found the way for a happy and peaceful life, lived accordingly, founded an organization and through that made every effort to transfer their wisdom to their contemporary society. Vethathiri Maharishi belongs to the second kind. A word of caution about the gurus of the second kind! As is the case with every epoch of time, nowadays there are many claiming to possess spiritual knowledge. What is the way to identify a real guru - one who will truly and selflessly guide his student in development of wisdom? The way is simple. If the teachings of the guru help to erase the boundaries between the people rather than thickening it, if the teachings are logical rather than faith-based; if he tries to elevate the disciple to be on par with the guru by allowing the disciple to preach and practice what the guru himself preaches and practices, we have met a real guru. In every sense of the above qualities, Vethathiri Maharishi is a real guru.

Vethathiri's observance of content and communication of philosophy made him not only contemporary but also relevant and philosophy has become richer and richer. His wonderful blend of convincing dialogue, with nuances and varieties of speech, and narration made his philosophy like living personality. His presentation of visual element, pregnancy of thought with concrete conclusion added variety to the 20th century's philosophy.

Vethathiri Maharishi is not only modern with his form but also relevant with his themes. The issues raised in his philosophy continue to be relevant today. The role of peace in politics, an inevitable element of non-violence, magnetism, faith motif, meaning of life, relationships are the main themes in his works. His art of philosophy emerges from his individualistic, delicate, inwardly felt awareness of man's confrontation with social and spiritual flux, the forces that mark the complexity of modern life and resolves the complexities of life at any context. His imagination is preoccupied with the exploration of the real and therefore his ideology may be described as realistic exposure of timeless and timely message for

mankind. The interesting thing lies in his exposing of all these without taking strident positions, retaining the inherent complexities.

The Paper explores some of the philosophical reflections of Vethathiri Maharishi like the below:

Vethathiri Maharishi is Life and Times

The basic Tenants of Vethathiri Maharishi Philosophy

Nature of Vethathirian Philosophy

Vethathirian Social Philosophy and Ethics

Vethathirian Philosophy of Spiritual Development

Vethathiri Maharishi: The Philosopher of Relevance

Vethathiri was a keen observer of people. His observation helped him to find the first guru from whom he learnt the basics of spirituality. At the age of about fourteen Vethathiri came across an elderly man of his village, Balakrishna Naicker, who found the boy receptive and a bit different from others. Balakrishna Naicker taught him hymns (bhajans), elementary philosophy and moral conduct. Vethathiri calls him his first guru. He gathered from his guru that, "To remove our imperfections, we should worship God. Then He would reveal himself on His own accord and make His nature clear to us." The need to worship God occupied the young mind of Vethathiri. To quote him: "I had heard that worship of Vinayaka is the royal road to victory in every field. There was no image of Vinayaka in our house. One reason was, there was no suitable space available there. A more compelling reason was, an image with its pedestal, cost two and a half rupees. So he continued to serve like this:

"This problem I solved in my own way. I shall, I said, worship Vinayaka where He was in His own temple. The temple at Guduvancheri is small in size. I asked for and got the keys. From 4-30 to 5-00 A.M. every day I poured water over the sacred image and rubbed it clean. The two towels that were there, were used by me alternately. While the image was wearing one, the other was washed and dried by me". "In the Month of Margazhi, (Mid-December to Mid-January) I offered worship at four o'clock. I could not bear the cold myself when I bathed in the tank. I was moved to pity at the thought that Vinayaka also would be similarly affected by the cold. So I went to my Father that day and asked: Father! Why not bathe Vinayaka in warm water during Margazhi?" He smiled as he explained, 'We should not do like that, child, Vinayaka won't feel the cold in the way you seem to think He would'.¹

Vethathiri's confrontation with the bhajan groups of his village had taught another interesting philosophical lesson. He was attracted by a devotional poem written by Thayumanavar which made him to think that God is spirit hence doesn't dwell in ideals. This thought didn't allow him to settle down to worshipping idols in rest of his life.

The Basic Tenants of Vethathirian Philosophy focuses on the existence of God, attributes, creation of man, components of human personality, mind, consciousness, the origin of universe, components, development of spirituality and his wonderful ethical principles for social harmony.

Maharishi's logic in finding truth is unparalleled in philosophy. Perception of truth by five senses is not reliable. So, he says applying sixth sense i.e. mind and its reasoning power will enlighten the whole truth which can be possible through contemplation or meditation.

This knowledge or God realization is the understanding of the Almighty or infinite space, which has transformed

as all things throughout the universe, at all times. Pure space is the penetrative fluid that can permeate all things. It pervades and fills the entire universe as infinitesimal energy particles. Neither by senses nor by mind can this fundamental substance be comprehended. Therefore, there is the illusion that this fundamental divine fluid does not exist at all. On the contrary, this divine fluid, pure space, has three potentials :

- Force
- Consciousness and
- Plenum

Nature of Vethathirian Philosophy presents his unique presentation of his argument, expository and convincing nature of his ideology which is the result of his highly meditative life. It also presents his unique explanation of evolution of living beings, planets, universe, five tan mantras, senses and mind.

The study of Vethathiri's nature of philosophy needs the complete comprehension of his works. His philosophy contains several unique attributes. He is unique in explaining his ideas with lucid, simple syntax. His ideology is blend of many ancient and modern insights arrived at thought provoking and highly relevant conclusions.

The first and foremost quality of Vethathiri Philosophy is highly balancing between matter and spiritual things. Descartes divided all the objects in the universe into two² one matter and the other conscious element. But he faced the difficult problem of establishing a close relation between them which have qualities and nature diametrically opposed to each other. Descartes, however, could not find a suitable solution of the problem.

A Vethathiri's philosophy is characterized with great expounding ideas with cardinal or ordinal principles. While exploring "the functional order of the living being there are eight phenomena"³ he says "which are the marvelous organic functions". They are:

- Physical Body
- Life-force
- Biomagnetic wave
- Genetic centre
- Brain
- Genes - base of the soul
- Mind
- Senses

Vethathirian Social Philosophy and Ethics deals with the very purpose of human life and steps to be taken in establishing global peace. This chapter aims at the global approach in attaining peace, social ethics, education, economics, human rights, and reforms of governments, social culture, and prosperity of India, empowerment of woman, children, environmental ethics and practical ways to give bright future for future generation. The aim of Vethathiri is to establish a global philosophy with the result that man cultivates the characteristics of world citizenship, the ideal of one world, one religion and one truth. These in turn pave the way for "World-Peace and Harmony". In order to achieve this, Maharishi lays be-down certain principles on which human personality has to be developed. According to marshi there are some valid

principles to

- World Without War
- Economic Justice
- Fair Judiciary
- One World Federal Government
- Reformation of Culture
- Living under the Guidance of Intellectuals
- Respect for Womanhood.
- Living in Tune with the Law of Nature.
- Sports to be made non-commercial.
- Significance of the Law of Cause and Effect.
- Basic Amenities to be available to all

Vethathirian Philosophy of Spiritual Development: Deals with basic components of human personality realization of self, mind, feelings, mental state, sixth sense, seven differences, purification of genetic center, realization of truth, three virtues, three needs, three protections, twelve principles and consciousness. It also presents different exercises the aim, sankalpa, benefits of karma yoga, Kaya Kalpa yoga and kundalini yoga and its methods.

Another means to realize the truth and moralize our deeds and thoughts is yoga. Such rectification will redeem our peace and happiness and last not only all through our lives, but also in the lives of generations to come. Such redressing of physical and mental derangement are all encapsulated 'Yoga'.

Vethathiri Maharishi: The Philosopher of Relevance deals with the attributes of modern age, needs and crisis of the age and relevance of Maharishi's philosophy. Maharishi's philosophy is simple to understand and to practice for a layman. It is universally applicable hence it is a global philosophy beyond caste, creed, religion, race and region.

Queries like why the 92 year old Maharishi gets so much concerned with peace and harmony in the world searches and supplies wonderful relevance for his philosophy in this 21st century. Revered Shri Vethathiri Maharishi has been concerned with peace and harmony, both in the individual, the society and the world at large. Maharishi has always believed that symptomatic treatment to the problem will not find a permanent solution, and hence the root causes are to be identified and remedial action taken. He was always concerned with the inequity, injustice, intolerance and violence within the individual, between the individual and the society and between nations.

The religious leaders themselves need to get free from orthodox and superstitious beliefs, on one hand, while on the other hand, the bare intellectualism bereft of intuitive knowledge and humanistic instincts would indulge in polemics without any outcome. What is therefore needed is to make people "Prajnavan Dharmika". Much more emphasis is needed for inner Peace and Personal Development through Holistic Education. For this, introduction of 'Science of Living' as a part and parcel of education at all levels is needed. In Science of living, there are practical exercises based on both science and spirituality, which can bring about integrated development of personality through attitudinal changes and behaviours of modification. The result is balanced physical, Mental, emotional and spiritual development of human beings.

To sum up, Vethathiri was the pioneer who changed not only the external frame work of Indian philosophy but also the limits of the picture of life at the core. Vethathiri has been a great source of inspiration and guidance to his followers. Dr. G. Alagar Ramanujam and Uma Madam are considered to be the leading disciples representing his philosophy. Vethathiri passed away on 28th March 2006 leaving under torrent impressions on the face of Indian spirituality and philosophy.

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