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# **SAINT VEMANA:**

**HIS PHILOSOPHY**

*by*

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**HYDERABAD TELUGU ACADEMY**

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## The Offertory

**C**ULTURE is the face and knowledge, the body of wisdom. As the flood-tide ebbs down, the river flows perennial, cleansed of all traces of turbidity. Likewise the stream of India's wisdom has harmonised itself to the enduring rhythm, having assimilated all that was fine and dynamic in the currents of foreign cultures that crossed its flow. This wisdom of India with its unbroken cord of catholicity has, through the ages, won the acclamation of the world.

The dictum that Indian wisdom is exclusively spiritual in content, and to that extent, unrealistic, abstract and theoretical, is a very facile one. It was, doubtless, by intuitive experience that the Rishis comprehended spiritual truths and revealed them in tones of rapture. But the savants, who interpreted these empirical Texts adopted strictly logical methods, in the same way as they did, the theoretical problems of life. This perhaps gave rise to the contradictions, seen between the Texts and the ancient commentaries there-of. In the welter of these differing commentaries and the Texts the layman caught confused and stood helpless, and a simple way of life and right conduct were no-where clear or near.

It is against this background that the life and personality of Vemana and others like him must be appraised. These saints were neither Rishis nor savants. But their one inmost urge was the redemption of Man. In an atmosphere of utter freedom, both from hoary tradition and contemporary practice they preached the path of Humanism, and for this their vehicle was mostly the spoken word and the homely idiom that straight carried the message to the hearts of the people.

In course of time, as the older Prakrits went out of vogue and Sanskrit became exclusive, many an Indian language developed into adequate vehicles of thought and expression. The various peoples while rightly cherishing their own language as a priceless heritage, have tended to treat with indifference and underestimate other languages. Thus the Maharashtra is inclined to rank Ramdas as the greatest Indian poet; while the Andhra arrogates that eminence to Nannaya. Besides this dangerous vice of provincial vanity, the growth of cultural integrity of India has suffered, in range, as the gains and gifts of each language lay aside from the collective wealth.

To present the best that has been sung and thought in the various Indian languages to the widest possible circle of readers has been one of the *fundamental aims* of The Hyderabad Telugu Academy. It is in pursuance of this aim that the present work "Vemana: His philosophy" is being published in

English, as this will facilitate translation into the various living languages.

The Academy owes a deep debt of gratitude to Dr. Ishwar Topa, Professor in Indian Culture, whose objectivity and Historical acumen have enhanced the value of the work.

It is hoped that the publication of this work at a period in History when the intellectuals all the world over are sensing perversion of knowledge and a cultural crisis, and when the nations and their leaders are in dire fear praying for sanity and peace, is well-timed. May-be in the voice of Vemana lurks a message!

The Hyderabad Telugu Academy

15th August 1950



# Preface

MEDIEVAL India records the cultural achievements of the great personalities who deeply influenced and moulded the life of the people and kept alive their spirit. Among these, the Bhagats and Sufees rank as the torch-bearers of Hindu-Muslim culture. Hindus and Musalmans have attached themselves to the world of the Bhagats and Sufees. The real culturalisation of Indian life was their undying work. Hindu-Muslim culture, as a living specimen of medieval Indian culture, owed its existence and 'blossoming' to their untiring zeal and selfless service. They unsurpassed as the harbingers of a humanised culture as well. Modern India thinks of a Bhagat or Sufee in terms of contempt and dubs him as a dud. This is due to the lack of appreciation on her part to assess the intrinsic qualities of a real Bhagat or Sufee as a self-cultured personality. That he carries in his person hidden gems of humanism and serves God through His creation are facts of least significance to her.

The Bhagats and Sufees of medieval India, undoubtedly, were ardent lovers of God, but their love

## II

for man was no less intense and unbounded. As a God-absorbed humanity, they never neglected but always looked after the well-being of the creation of God. The worship of God created in them such humane feelings and sentiments that they dared not snap but strengthen the tie of human relationship. The well-being of man was the key-note of their activity. If a cursory glance is cast at the lives of the great Bhagats and Sufees, it becomes evident that they were, in fact, the servants of God as well as of man. That the service of God lies in serving man was their unshakeable belief. Hence the God-loving and man-serving saints of our country reached their 'destination' by precept and practice in self-culture for the good of mankind. In this way, they were blessed with the vision of divinity and enviably effected far-reaching changes in the thought and activity of the people. The result of their fundamental teachings culminated in the development of a common cultural heritage for all peoples of our country, irrespective of community or religion. That they taught many a precious lesson in self-education was their unmatched contribution to humanistic philosophy. Their own life set an example in living upto the principle of the unity of man, which they preached through the unity of God as a common basis of human living.

Hindus and Musalmans as their followers lived together in a peaceful and harmonious relationship. The socio-cultural history of our country has ample date to record that the disciples and followers of the Bhagats

### III

and Sufees were found among the members of every community with the result that the Hindus and Musalman were knitted together into a community of common ideal and aspiration. The achievements of these Bhagats and Sufees stand out pre-eminent in promoting Hindu-Muslim culture and in establishing universal brotherhood of man. But the India of today fails to comprehend the inner meaning of such a social miracle in human relationship, as she has forgotten the lessons of synthesised culture as a dynamic human force of self-culturalisation. The truth of the matter is that the true message of humanism as delivered by the Bhagats and Sufees is what she needs at present in order to live at peace and in toleration with her peoples as a nation. To lay unction to her lacerated soul, after the dawning of freedom, is not possible without the readjustment of human relationship on principles of social peace, social tolerance and social equality. The Bhagats and Sufees, in their own unique way, showed the path of human concord and social peace which cultural heritage can be revived for her own good.

Vemana was one among the luminaries of the saintly world of India. His whole philosophy was the outcome of the quintessence of divine worship. The promotion of the principles of humanisation he found in divine worship, as wisdom is hidden in the worship of God. Man remains unaware of himself, as long as he does not realise God. Vemana's philosophy was neither moribund nor impractical. Its human dynamics was its forte. His burning desire was to initiate man

## IV

into the secrets of his own 'treasure-house'. According to Vemana, humanisation is not possible without divine worship: Man only, after his humanisation, can become a true worshipper of God. A-human man can never be a worshipper of God. Vemana's interpretation of this aspect of humanisation throws new light on divine worship. It is this very achievement of Vemana in the realm of self-culture that helps man to establish a new relationship with God.

As Vemana had been a keen diviner of men and things, the message of his philosophy as culture was not only significant for his age but it can also be the source of inspiration and guidance for the man of the world of every age.

For this reason, Vemana's message can become distinctly audible even today as it had been in his time. Though he was born for his age, it is the universal appeal in his message of humanisation that can be comprehended and appreciated by every individual or any country. This universal aspect of Vemana's philosophy has perforced the author to undertake the preparation of this small work.

The author is conscious of the fact that he has brought to light for the first time in coherent form the teachings of Vemana as a philosophy of culture. He is not aware whether he has succeeded in elucidating Vemana's philosophy, but he is quite convinced that Vemana, among the galaxy of Indian saints like Kabir,

Nanak, Basava, Shah Latif, Dadu and others, was really a great saint who lived for humanising the life of man by serving the cause of divine worship.

The author has to encounter difficulties in the preparation of this work, as he has to condense the thoughts of Vemana into a philosophy. The ignorance of the Telugu language was his first difficulty. Charles Phillip Brown's version of Vemana's Verses\* was the only source-book that he could lay his hands upon for his studies in the exposition of the saint's philosophy.

Principal R. Subbarao has made the task of the author easy by writing an illuminating Introduction on the life and poetry of Vemana, to whom he gratefully acknowledges his debt of thankfulness. The author wishes to express his deep sense of gratitude to the Hyderabad Telugu Academy for sponsoring the publication of this book.

## I. TOPA

27. *George Town,  
Secunderabad.*

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
Introduction <i>by</i> Prof. R. SUBBA RAO	
I. The Way of Humanisation	12
II. The Scale of Human Value	26
III. Human Richness & Poverty	40
IV. The Delusion of Life	58
V. False Approach to Life	62
VI. The Way of False Life	67
VII. The Bonds of Life	71
VIII. The Wandering of Life	76
IX. The Disgrace of Life	81
X. The Instincts of Life	87
XI. The Religion & the Teacher	104
XII. The Worship of God & Man	113







S A I N T V E M A N A



# Introduction

WEMA, Vemana or Mahayogi Vemana are familiar names to the thirty million people whose mother-tongue is Telugu. There are well nigh two thousand five hundred verses, that is, about 8 to 10 thousand lines claiming the voice of this philosopher-poet of the Andhras. These verses are in simple, short native metre and are studded with homely idiom and popular proverb. Their language is not strictly grammatical but sometimes colloquial. It is terse, epigrammatic but never pedantic or obsolete. For centuries these verses have been on the tongue of the Andhra people, both educated and uneducated. They have an unmistakable note of spirituality. And, sometimes they sting with satire; while every verse has one common line ending with the author's name 'Vema'.

Vemana's couplets have been read, recited and quoted with religious fervour by many and as literary examples of pungent humour and caustic satire by a cultured few. In the circles of scholars and poets, he was not held in much esteem, but his influence on the unsophisticated has been abiding.

The Andhras have never been bigots or obscurantists. They are not even ascetic by temperament or tradition. They love and enjoy the good things of the earth and are generally open-minded and receptive. Emotional by nature and artistic in disposition, an Andhra is wont to be swayed by the ideal rather than the mundane. Aesthetics more than religion grips his soul. A fresh approach to life, or a new way of refinement is his characteristic. Such being the case, cent per cent 'ascetics' like Vemana are few in the Andhra history, though worthy pontiffs to the principal Mutths of Shankaracharya are customarily recruited from the Andhra Brahmin community.

About 1825 A.D. Charles Phillip Brown of the Indian Civil Service, while serving in the Andhra districts, happened to listen to Vemana's verses and was irresistibly drawn towards their mellowed content and simple language. As a result of his efforts a number of manuscripts of Vemana's verses from different parts of the Telugu districts were procured and an attempt was made with the aid of some pandits to sift and edit them. Mr. Brown himself selected from the huge mass of manuscripts six hundred and ninety-three (693) verses and published them along with his English translation, piece by piece. Later, during the year 1920, generally known as the first decade of the Telugu Renaissance, keen interest marked the inauguration of a memorable meeting at Madras to pay homage to Vemana, the poet, philosopher and mystic, all combined.

Since then Vemana's verses have never ceased to attract the attention and appreciation of the modern Telugu scholars and critics, with the result that new editions of his selected poems, his biographies, and numerous essays on his work appeared from time to time. Literary stalwarts like the late K. V. Laxman Rao and Dr. C. R. Reddy have successfully tried their penmanship on one aspect or the other of this great saint of the Andhradesa.

To fix, with precision, the time of Vemana on the basis of uncontroversial evidence is difficult. Mr. Brown has put him in the seventeenth century, but the Andhra research scholars have, after much investigation and elucidation, assigned the period between 1386 and 1505, with a - not - altogether - disputable probability of his birth in 1412 or 1472 (earlier than Sri Krishna Deva Raya of Vizayanagaram and later than Basava, the great founder of the Veera-Saiva cult).

Regarding the birth-place of Vemana also there is more than one conclusion. A verse in the name of Vemana states:

“The village is Kondavidu, the residence in  
the west street; The first house is in  
Moogachinthapalli; What shall I say!  
My caste is that of the uncultured Reddys.”

From the foregoing, it is evident that his birth-place was Moogachinthapalli, a village in the present Ongole Taluk and later he took his residence at Kondavidu, the once famous regal fort-city of the

Reddy kings. Both the villages are in the Guntur district. But other sources, supported by tradition, lend equal, if not more, proof to the view that Vemana might have been born in Kondavidu, Guntur district, lived in Gandikota in the Anantapur district and died at Katharpalli, Cuddappa district. Even today what goes by the name of Vemanasmadhi, (the tomb of Vemana) is at Katharpalli where daily worship is being observed. It is also learnt that his descendants are still existing in the villages of Nallacheruvu and Katharpalli of the present Nellore district. But it must be said in all fairness that there is much weight in the persistent tradition and widely-held view that Vemana belonged to the ceded districts, though he might have travelled all through the Telugu country. The unmistakable tinge of provincial idiom and vocabulary in his verses as internal evidence bears out this conclusion also.

Speaking of Vemana's caste, Brown contented that he belonged to a community of wandering minstrels, known as Jangams who came in the wake of the Veera-Saiva cult. It is utterly untenable: Vemana had a soft corner for the Reddys and the Kapus. In accordance with literary convention he had described the caste of the Kapus in many of his verses as the 'Milk'-the symbol of sweetness and purity. Vemana was one of them, either a Reddy or a Kapu.

Glimpses into the closing era and the times in which Vemana lived are clues to the correct understanding of his moral teachings, his piercing

satire, his moving pathos, and all the rest as revealed in his verses. After the downfall of the Kakatiya empire the political sovereign power in the Andhradesa passed into the hands of the Reddys, who ruled from Addanki, Kondavidu and Rajahmundry. Their reign which lasted for a period of nearly a century and a half synchronised with remarkably intense activities in the domain of literature and culture. The Reddy kings were not only the patrons of literature but were themselves great poets and commentators. Great poets such as Yerrapragada, Vamanabhatta and Srinadha in the closing days of the Reddy reign, were either in their courts or were fondly patronised by them. It was during these times, due to the highly developed aesthetic taste of the Reddy kings, that the dramas of Kalidas were studied from a purely literary standpoint and their hidden aesthetic beauty was revealed in fresh commentaries. History tells us that Kumaragiri Reddy, like Agnimitra of Kalidasa's drama, was wholly a creature of the harem and gave himself up to the cult of 'the heaven on earth'. Pleasure-seeking was his creed. Music, dance, love and luxury were the gay expressions of the ways of his life. During his time even a roaring import trade in spices, scents, and articles of luxury came into existence. It is said that he converted nights into days during the spring festival celebrations. It is permissibly inferred that Srinadha's life and poetry, who came immediately after Kumaragiri, is a picture of light and shade of the social

conditions prevalent in the Andhradesa. It was brimful with gaiety, extravaganza, enjoyment and mirth, but social morality and public life were at their lowest ebb.

In the sphere of religion, the Andhradesa was dominated by Saivism whose missionary activity, through poems and songs, popularised extensively its cult and its ritual. The reactions of Veera-Saivism were neither slight nor slow. A spirit of vehement opposition, bordering on vengeful enmity, rose against the Brahmanic religion, the authority of the Vedas, Vedic ritual and caste stratification. Instead, the idea of human brotherhood and the conception of one-God burst forth in all fullness. The Veera-Saivic writers, who were bitterly against the Vedic ideal and ritual, were merciless in their attack on Brahmans and their Texts. The Veera-Saivic writers adopted a purely native metre and popular language for their compositions that straightaway touched the chord of the common man. Their writings succeeded in discrediting the Brahmanic ideal and demolishing the time-honoured structure of the Brahmanic society by their dauntless courage, their dire invective, their abundant love and their uncompromising concern for the emancipation of the common man. The neglect, ignorance and squalor, and the sad state of society equally contributed to the acceptance of their message by their supremacy over the people. It is no wonder that all the fervour and zeal incidental to the upcoming

of a reformation in the Andhradesa were witnessed in aggressive social movements propagated with the catchy spirit- of humanism and the new message of a democratic religion. This led to the conflict of ideologies in the domain of thought and values. The work of pulling down the social edifice was quick and speedy, but its re-construction and re-building moved with slow and difficult pace. Such is the picture of society, full of revolt, confusion and disorder, as it existed just before Vemana was born, or possibly while he was actually living. To add, perhaps, Vemana saw with his own eyes the rule of the Reddys fall and crumble and with it their aesthetic and cultural ideals also. This digression here is, indeed, necessary to estimate correctly the seeming vehemence with which Vemana's compositions are replete.

Vemana's life, as is often the case with saints and seers, is a veritable legend: He came from the Kondaivdu Royal family. Though initiated and educated in the old school of learning, he took to colloquial speech as a matter of uncompromising ideal born of his inner urge and conviction. This standpoint is represented by one school of thought about him. The other school, with no less insistence, holds that he was born in a simple rustic family. He was uneducated and untutored, and all his spiritual fervour and enlightenment was entirely due to the initiation of Somanadha, his guru. It may safely be assumed that Vemana received no education of the traditional type.

But, instances of divine insight and wisdom among the uneducated as witnessed in personalities like Paramahansa of our own time, are not rare. An anecdote of his life giving a super-natural touch is worth mentioning. After his death, Vemana was cremated at Katharpalli like all Sadhus. Once a thunderbolt fell on the sacred tomb of Vemana. Immediately the cemetery broke and Vemana, as a beautiful boy of twelve years, came out of it with the thunderbolt in his hand and after a few minutes re-entered the ever-resting place.

Now about Vemana's teachings and his philosophy. Human voice and words are the chief instruments, shaping, preserving and transmitting knowledge and science from generation to generation. Vemana's compositions, in the realm of the Telugu literature, may be valued as the reactions of a gifted soul to the world around. And as a system of philosophy, revealing a great seeker's re-interpretation of the Truth, the undying sayings of this Andhra saint are worth study and research. Despite interpolations, Vemana's compositions cover a perplexingly great variety of topics and problems, such as religion, social differences, human good and life. Vemana is wrongly dubbed as a satirist and an iconoclast. It is true that his satire is pointed, poignant and piercing, but all this is due to his righteous indignation for sham ideals and his fervour for speedy social and human 're-construction' which were surging like tidal urges and flashing revelation within his soul. No doubt, he bites bitterly

but without any malice. In one word, Vemana's satire is perhaps no less virulent than the malady of the times. If his whip was sharp, it was presumably because of human lethargy and social dearth, with the result that waves of agony flowed from his voice. Hardly a sect or a creed or a custom escaped his virulent shake-up. For instance:-

Lingayat religion is greater than all the six religions, but there are no rogues worse than the Lingadharis."

Or,

"Differences do exist among the followers of religion; but, in truth, no difference can exist in the spirit of their religions. The Vaishnavite wears his silk cloth, perfects his caste-mark on his fore-head but drinks pots of toddy and deceives the innocent."

Or,

"With hair grown into long plaits, and white ashes smeared all over the body, the Sanyasis often convert their scarlet robes into concubine's skirts."

Such naked couplets are there, but equally pure and sublime are his other revealing couplets:

"Place one single plate before all people who inhabit the earth; make them eat side by side and bury the caste. Put your hand on their head and initiate them into the Belief."

*Similarly,*

“Without seeing the Lord who is in your heart, you bow to the stones, far and near. If at all He lives, will He live in life or in stone?”

Or,

“They torture their limbs and call themselves Yogis but are unable to wash out their mind’s dirt; will the snake die if you beat only on its ant-hill?”

In a vein of high philosophic mood, Vemana says:

“Oh Lord! If I see you I forget myself. If I behold myself I forget Thee. How can one expect that he sees Thee and himself at once?”

As the charity of all charities, he praises the giving of food to the needy in the following lines:

“He who gives a handful of food to the needy will straight go to Heaven; there is no better charity than that of doing good.”

Or,

“He who collects millets like pearls, pounds them properly, cooks nicely and serves the food to the needy, what shall I say of him, he becomes Siva Himself.”

Vemana’s verses also exhibit keen powers of observation as well as sweetness of thought:

“Salt and camphor look very much alike; but their taste and properties are poles asunder. So also the wise and the common among the folk.”

Or,

“A wife without patience, a child without intelligence, great scholarship without virtue are all worthless.”

Or,

“A small worm spoils a big tree. So also a small wicked man poisons a great family.”

Or,

“Even if an enemy, fit to be hanged, is caught in your hands, never do him harm. Instead, help him to the utmost and beg him to go. It is *death* unto him.”

Or,

“If a dog is crowned on a most auspicious occasion and seated on a golden throne, he forgets not his innate nature.”

Or,

“How small is the seed compared to the massive Banyan tree.”

In comprehending the full range of these cryptic epigrams we are often lifted from our mundane plane to the vision and sublimity of Vemana's soul.

# Chapter I

## THE WAY OF HUMANISATION

Vemana's message of humanisation is simple and unsophisticated. Well-conversant with the low cultural level of the common people as well as of the higher strata of society he has to do plain talking through his sermons. In the lives of the people he has seen that man has not yet been culturalised. The aristocratic society has failed to establish its claim as the upholder and promoter of cultural values. In his opinion, it has been found wanting in living a cultured existence and in paving a path for cultural leadership. The aristocracy has undoubtedly acquired a place of honour in society, but it exists as a fallen humanity. Vemana has stripped naked its social values and its moral standards and condemned its ways of life as meaningless. Vemana's observations have been interpreted by the aristocratic society as sarcasm, but he has done all this in his own unpretentious way to show the light for its guidance and development.

“Those who consider themselves decent *and reputable* look upon the mad Vemana with astonishment; ah, the deity knows his *real humility while he appears* only to deride others.”

That his plain speaking was not palatable to the cultured men of his times is evident from his own observation. The main reason for their dislike seems

that Vemana has not only flouted their cultured ways, but also instructed them in the lessons of humanisation. He has expressed explicitly that pride and haughtiness are impediments in the making of man. Power, splendour and prestige do not help in the upbuilding of man, but his making is in his own struggle that counts ultimately. Vemana has seen the paucity of culture in the men of his times and especially in the aristocrats.

Vemana has been a keen student of human nature, and as such has pondered deeply upon every phase of human life. His standpoint is that human life is governed by biological laws. Physical fitness or unfitness is determined by mental and emotional conditions of man. Vemana elaborates the theme thus:

“If the body be well, the real nature of our course is clearly seen; but when the body falls into weakness, we cannot perceive the truth of our state.”

He has been aware of the fact that the disturbance in the balance of life-forces creates in man a feeling of helplessness, leading to his incoherent thinking or thoughtlessness and is responsible for his ruination. Erratic thinking is an expression of mere words, but it is the mind alone that makes thinking coherent and meaningful. Vemana says: “The mind is more to be depended on than mere words.” As there is no sense in the existence of thought without life, thinking has

to serve the cause of life while in existence. Vemana says:

“A lamp, if supplied with oil, flames meetly:  
a light devoid of oil expires. Thus when  
the body ceases to live our thoughts perish  
with it.”

Vemana has brought home that human life is not at the mercy of an arbitrary law. It is in fact the law of self-culturalisation that lends substance and meaning to it. The difference between animal life and human life is accentuated by the law of self-culturalisation. Man is born in the world for humanising his existence. Self-culturalisation recognises the principle of humanisation, which controls the free outlet of biological powers of life. What Vemana means to say is that man through his own indifference towards himself lives without self-knowledge and is a cause of self-ruination. Such human behaviour or mentality displays the erraticness of destructive tendencies. To live does not signify a day-in and day-out existence like an animal. It is the conscious existence lived in self-culture that fits man to play his role as a human personality.

It has been Vemana's sincere desire that man should come to his own in order to differentiate between the meaning of what he is and what he is not and then adjust himself to his own remaking. But Vemana feels repentant that man has not been up and doing in

knowing himself and lets himself go down in ignorance. Man should know his limitations. In this way, his pride can break into bits. His values can only alter, if he begins to think in terms of self-education. Vemana says :

“Neither in his birth or at his death is he free; he is the disposer neither of his origin or his end. Is it not ridiculous to talk of lordship in his intermediate life?”

In the exposition of such ideas, Vemana lays bare the psychological ‘facts’ about existence. It surprises him to see man pose as the ‘Master of the world’ when his own life is in reality a sham or a shadow. To know the secret of life is to accept the preamble that man is not the ‘Master of the world’, as his very existence is dependent upon factors which are beyond his control. He has not realised the nature of relationship with the forces of the world with a view to determining his own position in the order of things. Birth and death are stages of his beginning and end, through which he has to pass, but over which he has no control. He thus lives in the world without the sense of knowing the reality and presumes his life as an abiding principle. He thinks of himself as a miracle of an immutable and imperishable power. This is folly. Human life is not useless but has a value. To engross oneself in life without realising its reality is a foolish act, and is no help to him nor is his attachment to life any use. Human life is functioning under the law of time as

well. Man has to discharge his duties and responsibilities bearing in mind this aspect of life also. In this way, he can live in the world peacefully.

Having lived with the men of the world and studied their nature at close quarters, Vemana observes that man craves for worldly love. That man gets affected by self-indulgence, intoxication of wealth and outburst of passions are known facts to Vemana. Knowing this, he never has shunned the company of worldly men. By living amidst them, he has taken care of them by doing them a good turn. He describes the mentality of the worldly men thus:

“What is the dearest of all things? Life: but gold is dearer than a thousand lives: and dearer than gold are the words of a maiden.”

It has been his painful experience that men desire worldly love so that the things of the world may become theirs. Their success or failure in life is judged by such a worldly criterion. This Vemana calls the aimlessness of life, as in worldly struggle man loses his sense of realness. He should ponder well upon the nature of worldly activity and interest in the light of his sense of realness, and see that it does not hinder the development of inner-culture. He has come into the world to fight worldly values with a view to carving out for himself a cultured existence.

Vemana has given worldly men enough food for thought in his repeated messages of a humanised

*Culture.* It has come within the purview of his observation that the standards of a cultured man are different from those of a worldly man, whom Vemana desires to teach the value of self-culture for promoting human qualities. Self-culturalisation justifies no mere enjoyment of pleasures, craziness for wealth and seeking of worldly happiness. In man's life these worldly 'attributes' have their own limitations, as they do not count in the scale of ultimate values but retain their importance as a means. The worldly man ill-conceives life without inner-culture.

Vemana has discredited flimsy life-values for the art of living. To understand life and to know its secret is what Vemana has preached. He classified humanity culturally. There are different cultural types of men in the world. The classification of human personality is not determined by worldly standard of richness or poverty but by cultural values. Man, either high or low, is the specimen of a particular cultural pattern. In the world, there is a variety of such cultural patterns. It has been the achievement of Vemana to specify patterns of culture. Having assessed the importance of culture in human life, he has shown a way how a low culture develops into a high culture. The world has also taught Vemana a painful lesson in the degeneration of a high culture into a low culture. Man is, in fact, in need of a cultural guidance and directive. The real condition of the men of the world is:

“Seeing they cannot see; hearing they cannot hear! What pride is this?’ *The saying* is verified, that “blind is his sight and deaf is his hearing.”

While pondering upon such human condition, he has come to the conclusion that human life is marred by indifferent and thoughtless living. Men do not know what life demands of them. To live a lone wordly life is considered by them as real life. Living in the world they dare not visualise the tantalising scenes behind the drama of their lives. Without knowing such a secret of life, they have not been able to know themselves. The first lesson in human culturalisation is the cultivation of the sense of understanding for human conduct. If it is cultivated, man attains everything. In this way, he can alone be the master of his own destiny. Vemana says:

“The deity bestows on us that alone which is destined to us: what we gain is the result not of fate but our own conduct. Brahma is indeed the author of destiny, but we are in all we do, and *shall be* the agents ourselves rewarded or punished accordingly.”

In the culturalisation of man, Vemana stresses the point that the fate of man is hidden in his own actions. Human progress is culturalised human action and the culturalisation of human actions is not possible so long

as man is ignorant of his conduct. Such human behaviour determines the real human status. Vemana says:

“The best of the excellent on earth is he who knoweth the truth.”

The criterion of the pleasure-seeking man is of a non-cultural value. Vemana is of the opinion:

“The man who longs after the trifling comforts suffers the grief of many sorrows; it is out of his power to attain the highest of bliss, and live *forever*.”

The pleasure-seeking man, having abandoned the ideal of a humanised culture, is after gross living. He does not get to know the inner secret of his life. Vemana has no word of appreciation for the pleasure-seeking ideal of life, as he has known that this way human life goes waste. The peace of heart can never be the lot of a pleasure-seeking man, as he has not gone through self-culturalisation. In the same manner, that man is not esteemed by Vemana in whom the feelings of gratitude are dried up. Vemana says:

“He who says, “I know nothing”, is the shrewdest of all; he who says, “I am learning.” is a mere talker. He who holds his peace is the wisest and the best.”

Vemana has visualised the intrinsic value of culturalisation in the awakening of the self. For this reason, he pronounces his judgement:

“To know one’s self is the chief object; is there any other who can explain this to us? If we know not ourselves, none can teach us.”

In the awakening of the self, the value of the truth of life is realised. Vemana has known it for a fact that the people of the world do not value truth as life, as their life is full of untruth and deceit. Human culturalisation is a message of truth and instructs man to be truthful and to walk the road of truth. The man who desists from truth is no more himself and his life is immersed in deception. The war between truth and untruth in the personality of man is waged for promoting his formative and unifying powers. Untruth seems to thrive in the world at the expense of humanisation. In this way, human conscience is deadened and the truthful man is disliked by the world. Vemana gives expression to these thoughts thus:

“He who speaks *rough plain* truth is reproached by all the world. Truth should not be declared to the vile, but if you meet with a truly great soul, declare the truth to him.”

As a truthful man can never become popular among wordly men, so the virtuous man remains hidden from the world. There is a vast difference between him and the worldly man. In this connection, Vemana says:

“He who has no desire of *women* or of richness, is nowhere to be found in the earth: should there be such a one, his virtue would yet be unknown to men.”

The virtuous man is devoid of worldly desires. The worldly men may profit by his virtues, but his ‘worldly’ existence is of no utility for them, because his criterion is considered as useless and impractical. But the fact remains unaltered that the principle of virtue is not meaningless and valueless. In view of human culturalisation, it retains its value as the formative forces of self-culture help in bringing about virtuous living.

The cultural ideal of Vemana has been built upon the edifice of humanised principles. In the sublimation of human personality, man himself has to work up his own way. No non-human factors come to his rescue as in his living personality sublime forces are hidden. What is needed is to realise the importance of the culturalisation of human qualities for the well-being of man. Vemana expresses his ideas about a self-cultured man thus:

“He is the truly excellent man and superior to all sects, who draws no invidious distinctions between the castes.”

Or,

“He who, in the first place, swerves not from his own religion; who, in the second place,

reviles the creed of no other man, who cautiously refrains from forming any *evil* desire: he shall live in happiness: he is the first of men."

Vemana has thus condensed the philosophy of self-culture. That man alone is in a position to judge aright his fellow-men, who has freed himself from the prejudices of caste, tribe or clan and who has effaced the difference between himself and others.

The cultured man is, in reality, a caste-less man who has eliminated from his being all the traces of ill-feeling between his religion and the religion of others and come to believe in the one basic principle underlying all religions. Vemana believes that a true religion promotes and fosters in man feelings and sentiments of humanism and binds him with his fellow-beings in a relationship of human understanding and amity. It is common observation that the religions of the world are instrumental in creating conflict and strife in the lives of the people. But the true religionists emphatically deny that religions can be held responsible for perpetuating discord and disunity and boldly assert that it is only false 'religion' that creates such human plight or mishap. If the spirit of religion is made manifest through humanistic activity, then harmony and concord between human relations can be established on this earth of ours.

Religion is, in fact, a way of living which not only helps man to come closer to his creator, but to form ties

of unity with all men. Vemana has said that if man adheres to a true religion, then he can never think ill of other religions as his heart is free from hatred. It is religion alone that cultivates humane feelings in him. In self-culture, a religious man justifies his existence on the principle of human tolerance, but he negates himself, if he is without a living sense of equality and tolerance. Thus, he becomes a true follower of his own religion. The self-cultured man of Vemana's estimation is an universal man who lives human values in his person as a religious man. He, as the promoter of self-culturalisation, embodies in himself virtuous qualities and has thus conquered his heart. He is, undoubtedly, the best specimen among all men. Vemana says:

“He who bears to-day, to-morrow, or the next day to restrain his heart is the best of men.”

Self-culturalisation is an impossible task, unless man achieves complete mastery over his senses. Vemana says:

“Be not ensnared by the fire of hunger, by the flame of desire, or the heat of anger. If thou maintain one changeless disposition, this is freedom.”

Or,

“Let us abhor the corporeal mansion that renders us subject to the five feelings by

the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. See that thou art a being distinct from these earthly ties; and then shalt thou be happy."

Such life-experience of Vemana clearly elucidates that man as a slave of his senses is not treading the path of self-culture. Therein is no victory for him but his real victory is in the conquest of his senses. Man is not born to behave like a shuttlecock of his sensations. He is to sublimate them. Herein is his human greatness. This is the criterion of self-culture which he has to set before him. Vemana never entertains the idea that man can ever become devoid of all senses or instincts. It is their culturalisation that he is after. In this way, man comes to his own to stand up for a humanised existence. Otherwise it is a sign of ruination, if man lives under the domination of unbridled senses. Vemana says:

"Civility is indispensable in the world, but hypocrisy is a disgrace to the most sagacious of men: baseness leads to ruin, and malice towards others leads to our own destruction."

The perfect man is Vemana's ideal. He puts the same ideal before the man of the world. The perfect man is no miracle of birth or destiny. He is a 'self-made' man in the domain of self-culture. He is, in fact, a man of flesh and blood, born in the world to humanise himself. Vemana has tried to culturalise this very man to the stage of human perfection. To

him the perfect man is a fulfilment or completion of a common man, who unmeshes the tangled relationship between him and the world in order to emerge into a perfect personality. Thus, humanised heart and head befrees from the cobwebs of misconception and misunderstanding, assists in culturalisation of life., Perfect man, according to Vemana, is a world-experienced personality, penetrating into the secret of the world and man and balancing his equipoise.

Vemana's views about the perfect man are as follows:

“The man that has attained perfection, draws no distinctions between day and night, the mind and the universal nature, or himself and another man.”

Or,

“He who sees that all men must die, and knowing death is certain, fixes his soul in meditation on the divine essence—this is the perfect man.”

The perfect man is a living example of human wisdom. Vemana says:

“He *alone* among the sons of men merits the title of saint who knows the deity that dwells in his heart; know thyself, and thou shall become the deity.”

# Chapter II

## THE SCALE OF HUMAN VALUE

It is Vemana's innate desire that man should realise the value of life in the light of social realism. The society that claims to maintain and preserve human status possesses the right to culturalise its members. After having taken stock of the sum-total of social life of his times, Vemana arrives at the conclusion that it has been vitiated by disintegrating forces of sharp social divisions. It has outspent all its energy in making man devoid of good sense and good living. The formative factors of human character and personality have not contributed to the making of a cultured life. The principle of social discrimination or division has come in the way of man. Before Vemana's eyes such degradation of human life has its recurring scenes. Human criterion has been thrown overboard. The social conditions have exerted enslaving influence on man leading to the dwarfing of his personality with the result that he has been made to forget the real worth of a humanised existence.

In prescribed principles and ordained injunctions of society, the common man has sought his refuge. From birth till death, he has to traverse only its chalked-out ways. Social laws have been so rigid and tough that he dare not cross their limits. In such a society the question of the culturalisation of life cannot arise for the common man. To live according to one's choice or free-will is beyond him. This has been one of the causes of dearth in the way of promoting social harmony and concord in the hearts of men of those times. The society has been composed of heterogeneous elements. There have been no traces of the feelings of sympathy and loyalty in man to work and co-operate in the interest of the community, but he has been compelled to live in the small worlds of caste or clan. He has been a member of his caste or his social group but no free member of the community. Such social immobility and disharmony has been responsible for creating feelings of revolt against human injustice and discrimination in a sober-minded person like Vemana who has stood up for the protection of human rights and offered his mite in ousting social inequalities. Vemana has to fight out the issue because the fall of man as a social being is not the work of human actions but social organisation.

Vemana has devoutly wished that man becomes conscious of social unrealities without getting himself intricated in them and lays the foundation of a new social life with a view to furthering humanisation.

Vemana has to solve a tough social puzzle e. g., whether it is within the power of man to retain his humanistic traits in full, while adhering to discriminative social ways, or would it be ever possible for man to regain his lost humanity in the upcoming of a new social order based on democratic principles.

Vemana has never been an idealist or a day-dreamer. His realistic sense has been the outcome of the world he has moved in and about as well as of the knowledge he has stored in respect of human nature. He has not been remorseful to recognise that man is born weak, but what has pained him most is that society is at the bottom of human degradation. To right social wrong is to wage a war of humanistic principles. Thus, his mission of life has been to save man from social tyranny and injustice. Man is born free and has to live in a free atmosphere. Vemana has preached such a gospel so that man should attune his whole being to a reawakened humanism for the upbuilding of a new social order. A good social order ensures peace, harmony and progress for man. The freedom of human life is man's forte. If such a social order does not exist, then man has no hope of realising his own self.

Vemana has been all condemnation for a caste-ridden social order whose laws create horizontal bars of discrimination and division among its members, though inherently they have no power to determine the real human status. In support of these ideas, he observes:

“Disputations as to which caste is the best are all fruitless; all the tribes originated in the same origin: who can decide as to the superiority or inferiority of any one.”

While reprimanding the upholders of caste, Vemana instructs: “Consider, is any one caste superior to the rest? what is the use of living without understanding? the man of understanding may be born in any tribe whatever.”

To pin faith in caste is a sign of human folly.

“They cannot perceive in this Kalayuga that the respectability of all men in regard to caste is the same. The blustering fool looks upon no one as his equal and scorns all men.”

Vemana has seen that worldly men live a life of ease and comfort but are ever disregarding of virtuous and truthful ways in the age of untruth (Kalayuga). Hence caste has no meaning for them. What Vemana wishes to bring home to the people of the Kalayuga is that, for their age, caste has no value or significance, because it is only in the age of truth (Satyayuga) that caste works wonders in the sphere of virtue and truthfulness, in the upbuilding of character and in the development of spirituality.

It is common knowledge that caste determines human actions but Vemana attaches no such

importance to the action-determining factor of caste in the Kalayuga. He makes the point crystal clear that caste is no determinant for man in acquiring virtue. Hence the belief of the common man in adhering to its laws is based upon an erroneous idea and is stupid. Vemana says:

“What matters food or caste, or country so as to effect our bodies? Surely the trouble men take *about caste* is all ridiculous.”

Vemana has known intimately the men of his times. It has been his experience that the ignorant people not only believe in the sanctity of caste but also the learned and the intellectual have belief in it.

Vemana's surprise at the ways of worldly men has been that they, on the one hand, take pride in caste and strut before the world as its supporters; on the other, they let down the rules of caste for the sake of worldly interest or gain. In their individual lives its laws seem to operate but worldliness takes possession of them completely. Vemana says:

“Men of *pure caste*, and of high descent, and those who overflow with learning, are after *all esteemed less than* the sons of the handmaid of the rich man.”

Worldly men look up to a status of wealth. Vemana has been astonished to find that humanism has no value in the scale of wealth. While considering

the criterion of wealth as of a higher order, they discard human standard and allow themselves to be influenced by false and fleeting values of wealth. He has visualised the degradation of human personality in the pursuit of wealth-phobia. He says:

“If they see a man wearing beads, earrings and a vest with a roll of betel and plumpness of body, be his caste what it may, they invite him to *sit by* them.”

But the ludicrous aspect of human life is that he who is ever free from the clutches of wealth though he be of virtuous character, is often a victim of caste regulations and laws. Vemana says:

“But of unshaven, with soiled garments and a foul body, *like a hermit*, be his birth what it may, they bid him begone.”

In the world wealth is rated higher than caste but within the world of caste poverty and virtue are deemed below par. Vemana exposes the fallacy of caste in these lines:

“The man of no birth is still honoured for his wealth and he who has nothing sinks in caste. Thus is wealth honoured above birth.”

Vemana has been no respecter of a caste-dominated society. To do away with caste and clan is to work

for the uplift and welfare for man has been Vemana's belief. He observes:

“If we carefully observe and examine the universe, we shall see that all castes equally originated therein: then all are equal, surely all men are brothers.”

According to Vemana, the characteristic feature of a democratic society is that it lives up to the principle of human equality. It degenerates into a farcical society, if it casts the equality of human status to the winds. Vemana, in his own life, never lets himself be governed by the principle of inequality. He firmly believes in and adheres to the principle of equality.

Vemana has shown by precept and practice that man can live up to the principle of equality. The idea of human brotherhood is a fib, if the vestiges of superstition, pride and esteem of caste persist in man. The talisman of caste can be broken into bits. Vemana has known the secret of dissolving caste into nothingness: He has been well aware that all men, as human beings, are equal and are knit together in the relationship of a common brotherhood. What is needed is a new democratic vision of life free from the frauds of caste. It can go the way of dissolution, if the idea of human brotherhood catches the imagination of men. It can be made possible by inviting men of all descriptions and denominations to dine together. Vemana says:

“Place one dish before all men in the world and let them eat together, abolishing their castes. Lay the hand on their heads and convince them *that their present distinctions are absurd.*”

Vemana has undoubtedly raised a banner of revolt against a caste-governed society but still a knotty problem awaited solution at his hands. Vemana has been fighting against the caste-based society, but in the world of India there has been a very large number of human beings who have no social status at all. They are the outcastes of society - the untouchables. Their life is a lurid picture of human degradation. Though they are born as human beings, they have been debarred from enjoying human as well as social status as enjoyed by caste-born men. They are a look-down humanity. Social or human rights and privileges are not their lot. Even ostracism against them has not been decried by the caste-ridden society.

Vemana has suffered under the pangs of social injustice meted out to the untouchables and raised his voice of protest in their support. As unflinching fighter for the down-trodden he has enthroned them in the core of his heart, and never brooked any insult to human dignity. His foremost task has been to assign human status to the untouchables.

That the untouchable is no human being in the estimation of the caste-believing people has been a

veritable cause for igniting the fire of wrath in Vemana's heart. He has looked upon the untouchable just like any other human being. While espousing the cause of the untouchables, he rends asunder the veil of deception from the eyes of those who believe in the caste-ordination of human status. He says:

“Thou art defiled and unclean, touch me not,” they cry: what limits are there to defilement? What is its source? All human bodies are equally unclean: defilement is born with ourselves in the body.”

Vemana has always upheld the sanctity of man irrespective of birth or status. If man is pure, then all men are pure; and if he is impure, then all are impure. To say that the untouchable is alone impure and is not a human being because of his birth is human folly. Men say that if an untouchable touches them, they become impure. About the sense of impurity and the untouchability affecting life, Vemana says:

“Why should you plunge in water *to purify yourself*, if a Pariar touches you? He became what he is in consequence of his sins in a former birth: *how stupid are those who cannot comprehend this?*”

Vemana has been a steadfast friend of the untouchables unlike the people who have been harsh towards them. He has made them feel that the stigma of birth on the untouchable is a punishment enough for his past

actions but they have no right to ostracise him in his present life and hate him. To calumniate a Sudra or an untouchable is no justifiable act on the part of man. Vemana says:

“There is not a vile wretch in the earth than him who scorns other men, calling them Sudras: after his death he shall fall into hell.”

Vemana puts a blunt question to the caste-people:

“Why should we constantly revile the Pariar? Are not his flesh and blood the same as our own? And of what caste is He who pervades the Pariar *as well as all other men.*

If there is divine light in men, is there no such light in an untouchable?

Vemana ridicules the idea that a caste man alone possesses the right to establish his relationship with God, and a poor untouchable is not even privileged to form contact with man. Is the God of an untouchable different from that of man? Vemana instructs man about the same origin of all men. He says:

“Why should you revile a Pariar when you see him? This is merely unmannerly language. Of what caste is He who speaks in the Pariar?”

While uttering a note of warning to men, Vemana says:

“Consider not him a Pariar of *degraded rank* who is so by birth; he who breaks his word is far viler. He who reproaches the Pariar is worse than him.”

The question of a degraded human status is determined by low character, not birth.

Vemana has laid great stress upon the intrinsic value of culturalising human character. Self-culture waxes in good actions, but wanes in bad actions. Human superiority or inferiority is determined by high or low self-culture. It remains dormant unless it is revived by the forces of the heart.

In the following lines Vemana shows what he means by an untouchable:

“The man who cannot keep his word is *vile* as a Pariar.”

This very thought is further elaborated by him in the following manner:

“He who is devoid of purity of speech is no better than a Pariar.”

Vemana also says:

“Though a man be by birth an outcast, if he orders his heart, he is no outcast: he who cannot govern his affections is the vilest of the vile.”

Vemana has never desisted from telling the naked truth that the difference between an untouchable and man is not of human birth but human actions. In the making of human personality an untouchable occupies the same position as any other human being occupies. The highest among men can be a poor specimen of humanity compared to an untouchable and a worst untouchable can be rated much higher to him, when the principle of humanism is applied for assessing men.

It should be borne in mind that man is not only born as man but he has to make himself into a man. All men are born alike. The difference between man and man is the difference in the attainment of self-culture. Vemana's ideas bear out the truth of such a statement in the following lines:

“Call not him an outcast who possesses a good disposition.”

Or,

“If a man has still in his heart the principles of a Pariar and yet scorns Pariars, how should he become twice born while devoid of every good quality?”

It is common observation that men (not untouchables by birth) behave like Sudras or untouchables by their actions. Vemana says that between them and the untouchables there is no difference and as such it is not right to condemn the untouchables alone. He says:

“They who are not born Sudras, and yet revile Sudras; who hold themselves twice born

and rely on that title; still, if unable to restrain their hearts are the lowest of Sudras."

In the cultivation of the qualities of heart the Brahmanic worship is of no avail as it does not produce any change in man. It only creates a sense of haughtiness and pride in him. About the Brahmanic man, Vemana says:

"If he forgets the nature of his body which is composed of *flesh and blood* and pride himself on the title of "twice born" will death and hell hereby lose their power over him?"

Or,

"Will the application of white ashes do away the smell of a wine pot? Will a cord over your neck make you twice born?"

Or,

"The Brahman, when he has assumed a particular garb, imagines he is no Sudra: is it not strange that his brahmanhood perishes when he dies?"

Vemana has never brooked the conceit of the Brahmans. He bursts out thus:

"The Lords of the earth say, "We are pure, we are learned in the scriptures;" they scorn all who are in their natural state. Truly the poorest palmar is better than such boasters."

Exposing the sham of Brahmanic life, Vemana says:

“Being ignorant of himself, how shall he instruct others? He roams about idly, no better than a brute, and performs religious ceremonies for the sake of pitiful fees.”

Thus the Brahmanic way leads not to self-culture. It is actually humanised living that augments the cultivation and promotion of self-culture in men without the distinction of caste, creed or colour. This the eternal message of Vemana in balancing the scales of human values.

# Chapter III

## HUMAN RICHNESS AND POVERTY

Vemana's conception of self-culture has no bearing upon richness or poverty. It is the real man that counts in the struggle and mastery of self-culture. Vemana has seen the world but never accepted its standards of value. The chimerical aspect of worldly justice has been a known fact to him. In determining the worldly status of man humanism is discredited to play its role. Vemana has viewed the principle of social division as nonsensical. Is the principle of social division based upon richness or poverty? Or is it inherent in social determinism as a phenomenon of human behaviour? Vemana gives no answer to any one of these questions as he has to grapple a more vexing question, namely whether humanism flourishes or decays in the state of richness or poverty. He has not the slightest objection in accepting that humanism does not depend upon richness, though poverty smothers it completely.

Vemana has studied closely the life of the rich and has come to the conclusion that richness is an obstacle in the way of humanisation. It unmakes man as a hindering influence. Richness, in the eyes of the world, has social bearing and importance. It occupies a low position in the scale of self-culturalisation. Wealth brings man under its clutches, and eventually degrades him. Vemana observes:

“At beholding her face, love arises in the heart, at viewing money, we are ensnared; we fall into the snare, and all our joints are broken!”

Intoxication of the power of wealth destroys humanism. The criterion of wealth is sheer richness alone. It does not take into account the worldly status of the wealthless common man. It only honours and esteems the wealthy. Vemana has been conscious of the fact that the standpoint of the rich is not correct in estimating the value of men and things as richness deprives him of the sense of understanding and appreciation. That is the reason why, in spite of wealth, the rich man's life is a woeful tale of suffering and anguish. Vemana says:

“Seeing he cannot see, he will not open that mouth of *his*. Hearing heareth not, through arrogance. Such is the disorder of the man of wealth?”

Falsifying the belief of the rich that wealth or

richness forms a permanent tie of friendship with life  
Vemana says :

“If you consider your possessions as your own, fools alone will agree with you. That alone is yours which you have bestowed on others, the rest is not at your disposal.”

Vemana makes the point clear that the characteristic of wealth is illusory. Man, in his ignorance, thinks it to be real, but its value is estimated only in terms of human use, utility or benefit. Vemana says:

“If you have buried your wealth what good can you, or your son derive from it? You merely suffer anxiety regarding it. A luckless wretch can never have any real enjoyment.”

Or,

“Those who will bestow nothing in charity who consume not their riches but pine for more, shall perish without enjoying any comfort.”

Wealth really becomes a human good, and not a mere exchange of barter, if it comes into force to effect the well-being of man. Vemana says:

“If after acquiring wealth he use it not with liberality, how shall the sinner preserve it?”

Vemana has no faith in hoarding up wealth or in burying it in the entrails of the earth, with a view to

deriving a feeling of satisfaction or satiety. He would not allow it to become a dead weight. If it is not 'released' to bring relief to the needy humanity, it will change hands in the end. Vemana says:

“If thou consume it not thyself, not bestow it in charity, but hoard up thy wealth for thy sons, and then die without pointing out *where it is buried*, all thy riches shall fall to the lot of strangers.”

Vemana has never detested wealth, but resisted to end the force of its 'self-centred' activity in the life of man. That much good can be done to humanity by wealth has been Vemana's belief. Its beneficial use means the promotion of human good. Vemana, in all desperation, has been compelled to advocate the idea of expropriation as a legitimate cause for removing human dearth and poverty, as the rich of the world are deaf and blind to the sufferings of humanity and refuse to alter their ways of self-interest or self-aggrandisement. Vemana says:

“Every man may give of his own, and this is no great matter to anyone; he alone can be called liberal who without hesitation takes the property of others and bestows it in gifts.”

Or,

“Why should a man of resolution hesitate because the property belongs to another?

By bestowing it in charity it becomes its own: What can be done to him? The thunderbolt falls innocuous at his feet."

Vemana has espoused the cause of wealth as a need-relieving factor in the life of man. If it is utilised for the service of man, it is immaterial to him how it has been earned or accumulated. The only thing about wealth that ultimately matters is the human purpose for which it has been utilised. Vemana says:

"Whatever riches have been accumulated either by evil devices, by theft, by fraud, or by any rash act; whoever has hereby become rich, shall be happy, if he bestows much on the poor."

Vemana has experienced that wealth affects human psychology. Human will-power fades into nothingness with the decrease of wealth. He says: "If wealth leaves us, resolution will not remain." But he has been conscious of the fact that the spirit of man has to dominate wealth. If it ceases to function in controlling wealth, then wealth is of no importance. Vemana says:

"If spirit be wanting, wealth is nothing."

In Vemana's philosophy of self-culture, the sublimation of human desires is a *sine qua non*. Greed is universal and akin to man. Vemana's 'specific' for curing the greed of wealth is the treatment of man

himself. It is not in the free accumulation of wealth that the desire for greed is sublimated, but in the correction of human attitude towards the rightful disposal of wealth. In this way, the rich and the poor will be freed from the ever-gnawing greed of wealth, and a natural give-and-take relationship between them will be established for the good of both. Vemana says:

“Why should a man grieve because he lacks the wealth which he sees heaped up in the houses of others? In his former birth he died without attempting to perform any charitable act, and now reaps the fruit of that life.”

“Those who have to bestow not (O ye poor!) shall in their next birth will not receive even alms. Know and understand this; it is evident to all men; say not that you are deluded.”

This approach of Vemana to human richness or poverty strikes a novel note in the determination of human actions in regard to the attitude of all men, rich and poor, towards the acquisition or paucity of wealth. The man of wealth goes the way of the poor in future life, as the poor has gone in his former life, if he fails to realise the hidden meaning of a relationship existing between wealth and the rich or the poor. Thus wealth serves to redeem or blast human life.

Though Vemana has visualised in wealth the power of bestowing good to man, the rich of the world have not come up to his expectations as the benefactors of humanity. Richness not only corrupts the rich, but also its vicious influence is equally felt in the lives of all men and women. It degrades human personality, when they take up the false standard of richness. Vemana says:

“If they see a man of property, women will lay their very vests for his feet to walk on; but if they meet one who has lost possessions, they hold him no better than a walking corpse.”

Or,

“If one be possessed of wealth, they look him as the god of love: but if he falls into poverty, and is unable to rise *and help himself*, be he cupid himself they look upon him as a Pariar.”

Vemana has been aware of the fact that “in the world riches form the chief objects” and “in wealth does the due performance of every duty depend.” He has not been enamoured of the charms of richness like worldly men, as his touchstone of human values has been self-culture. He says:

“Virtue is the origin of every blessing; and final beatitude depends upon *the conduct of our own hearts.*”

The rich man is engrossed in worldliness and has not equipped himself with the culture of the self. He lives in self-ignorance. Vemana says:

“He wears many ornaments and is puffed up with delight that others gaze at him. Surely he is unable to know himself.”

It is a pity that he is forgetful of himself and does not realise the end that awaits him. He lives in wealth and for wealth without understanding the significance of his own life. Vemana says:

“The wicked wretch considers the wealth in his house as his own for ever, and hides it in the earth; yet he cannot carry a *cauri* or a farthing with him when he dies.”

Vemana grieves for the rich man who has learnt no lesson in generosity or charity as a man of affluence. He is no more a rich man but a miser. Vemana says:

“When he beholds a turban on the head, a well fitting coat, a fair belly and rings in the ears, the beggar approaches him, little supposing what a mere brute *the miser* really is.”

Or,

“Those misers who starve themselves, and place a dragon’s crest *as a guard* over their treasures and bury them in the earth; after *they die and* are burnt shall fall into the hand of Pluto.”

As poverty is a hindrance in divine worship, so richness is none the better in the worship of God. Vemana says:

“When he is in poverty he reproaches the Providence: when he has wealth; what does he care about the deity.”

Or,

“A man labours to gain wealth for the sake of his wife, his child, his mother, and his father. But if he looked to God, these should no longer exist *so as to agitate him.*”

In the eyes of Vemana, the rich, who have no genuine desire for charity, or shamefacedly do charities, are beyond redemption. He says:

“Those utterly worthless wretches who, when they winnow grain, give away the dregs and scum as charity—shall *in their next transmigration* be born earthworms.”

Or,

“He heaps up wealth, and gives none in charity: he consumes it not himself, but hides it! Will not the bee that stores up honey yield it *by force* to the traveller?”

To nurture the feeling or desire of generosity and liberality is the only redeeming feature in the life of

the rich. This is considered as the stay of their life. Vemana says:

“The wealth of liberal men shall always increase, poverty shall never befall them.”

Or,

“The rich man who takes the destitute by the hand and rescues him, shall increasingly swell in *happiness*.”

If wealth is turned into good use for the benefit of human beings, it will help the rich in his own self-culturalisation. The one who considers wealth as his own and the other who is bereft of it live under a delusion. Vemana says:

“Naked was he born and naked does he depart. He that is in the body wanders the earth as though naked: Long as he live cannot become a doer of good.”

Or,

“When he departs *this life* his riches follows him not, neither when he returns in *another transmigration*: when he again dies he carries not his wealth with him. Where does he go and where does his wealth go?”

Speaking about the ultimate end of wealth as a factor of human determinism, Vemana warns the rich

that richness has nothing to do with their hereafter life, though they consider wealth to be the strongest pillar of their life. But they forget one cogent fact that the friendship between life and wealth can be snapped at any moment.

It has been Vemana's conviction that wealth has to serve man and not man wealth. Vemana is no opponent or hater of wealth. What he wishes to bring home to the rich is that wealth as such is a meaningless and purposeless pursuit, if it augments the status of richness alone. Wealth is needed as an indispensable means for removing human suffering or want. This is the duty of the rich to perform towards the poor, the wealthless humanity, of the world. If it is not done, then Vemana thinks that the rich of the world have failed to discharge their duty and, for such an omission, they shall have to pay a dear price in their life. Vemana says:

“He will not move his hands to bestow gifts, he collects much wealth and buries it, ultimately he shall pay penalty; the man shall be ruined root *and branch*.”

Vemana observes that wealth is a passing phase in the life of the rich and it is sheer stupidity on their part to take airs of pride and haughtiness because of their richness. He says:

“Through pride, partly from power and partly from wealth, men fall into sin.”

Or,

“Riches flourish, like the charms of women, for a season, but rapidly fade away; as moonlight dies when a cloud passes over the sky.”

Richness and poverty are inter-changeable ‘commodities’ in the lives of worldly men, who have to realise their consequential importance. Vemana says:

“In the day of wealth a man is puffed up, and cannot see others; when in poverty, he has nothing left to bestow. Is there any season free from *the ills both* of richness and those of poverty?”

Or,

“As wealth increases, inclinations increase; with our inclinations our evil nature fail not to be exaggerated: when wealth ceases, our lusts leave us: and with those lusts are our bad dispositions diminished.”

Vemana warns men of the pitfalls on the path of richness. If wealth has any meaning or value, it is only understood or appreciated by promoting human welfare and by saving man from ill-effects of crude desires, intoxication and pride of wealth. He observes:

“He who values himself on his wealth and bestows none on others, revelling in riches, shall, in the end, perish and never see good.”

To harness it in the service of man for his own good is the best what it can do to end human misery and exploitation. Moreover, its beneficial power can be utilised as a cementing force in bringing together man and man. In this way, the rich not only does his duty towards a deserving and needy humanity, but also stores the wealth of virtue for his ultimate well-being.

As Vemana has seen the ruination of man in the pursuit of purposeless richness, so he has also visualised the end of all good human qualities in poverty. He is no friend of the worldly rich, as their 'blind' ways have repulsed him. His humanising spirit is ever alert in saving them from the danger of wealth-cravings, but his heart bleeds as he witnesses the degradation of man in the state of poverty. He says:

“When a man falls into the flames of poverty he himself perishes and ruins every one near him; poverty indeed is looked upon as absolutely a sin!”

Human poverty is a state of existence in which man, instead of following the path of humanisation, slowly but surely glides into the jaws of death. Every human quality deadens in the state of poverty. A poverty-stricken man does not feel the glow of life or sparks of active existence. Vemana's belief is that poverty robs man of all his senses. The poor man is denuded of the beauties of inner culture. Neither

morality, nor religion nor humanity develops in him. Such a poor human being is in need of unbounded help and sympathy as he is not responsible for his human dearth and disgrace. The whole responsibility falls on the shoulders of his well-to-do fellow-beings, who should come to his rescue.

Vemana epitomises human experience in poverty thus: "a poor man is considered as utterly intolerable." That poverty brings about such an undesirable state of existence has been Vemana's sorrow. He has been compelled to raise his voice of protestations against the callous attitude and colossal indifference of the rich and the wealthy towards the poor. While supporting and sympathising with the poor, Vemana gives vivid expression to his innermost thoughts in the following lines:

"By want of wealth even caste becomes degraded; all fame is blotted out by want of wealth; poverty leads to the loss of purity and puts an end to respectability."

Poverty crushes human life, emotionally and mentally. Full of pathos, Vemana expresses himself in such words:

"In time of poverty the heart itself becomes poor and senseless as a cubbed tigress; how should any good accrue to one so base minded?"

Vemana sees no ray of hope in a poor man for developing his innate capacities in order to better his life. Born a human being, he cannot pass through the stages of humanisation. This human deterioration Vemana laments most. But in his heart of hearts pulsates a feeling of assurance that a poor man can be saved from perdition and can take part in his own re-making by treading the path of man. To free him from the demoralising influences of poverty is the task of all men; otherwise he remains bereft of his humanness and dies undeserved in poverty. Vemana considers poverty as a sin against humanity.

“He that is hungry forgets every religious tie,  
all purity of heart disappears in the dark.”

Or,

“The misery of poverty is known to God alone. He who views the poor man and holds him as nought, is no better than a corpse.”

Human poverty is also responsible for creating feelings of revolt in the wide-awake man of the world who takes up the cudgels for the poor. Vemana feels in the same way:

“He that embraces poverty shall become a beggar” has been his grave warning to those who wish to renounce life.

Vemana looks down upon the 'profession' of beggary as poverty. He has been fully conscious that poverty creates psychological hindrances in man. Human sympathy is not a connotative attribute of mental quality but a life-to-life alertness in co-operation and help. It fosters a relationship of affection and love between man and man. Man alone can help man and in this way the condition of the poor can be ameliorated. If man does not struggle for removing human poverty, then he fails in the task of raising human status of his poor fellow-beings.

Vemana has known the limitations of the poor who themselves cannot relieve the distress of their brethren but it is the well-to-do of the world, who are in a fortunate position to remove the difficulties and miseries of the poor. Only they should be aroused to feelings of fellowship and charity to undertake to do a good turn to suffering humanity. Vemana says :

“To what end is wealth if unknown to the poor?”

Or,

“To give food to the hungry is as meritorious as offering it in sacrifice; so great is the charity of relieving the poor.”

The good done for the welfare of the poor is like a sacrificial act or a virtuous deed. Vemana persuades the rich to discharge a moral duty towards the poor

by supporting them. Giving a moral colouring to the question of human poverty, Vemana says:

· “To refrain from grieving others is as meritorious as sustaining the poor,”

Thus man works up the process of his own re-making as a cultured personality by upholding the cause of the poor. Vemana says:

“Whether his wealth be derived from the estate of his father, from a relation, or from any others – he alone can be considered virtuous who freely and affectionately bestows it on the poor.”

In entertaining and working for the cause of the welfare of the poor, there is a sense of satisfaction that man has done some good to his own kindred humanity. By doing so, he goes up in popular estimation and is eventually revered. To stretch out a helping hand to the poor is not an act of humiliation, but it signifies an enhancement of human status. Vemana says:

“The man who relieves the poverty of the sick and destitute shall be honoured even in this life.”

Such a man is considered virtuous and honourable. He is even counted as good-hearted.

“He alone can be called beneficent who relieves the poor and miserable.”

In the thought-world of Vemana, the man of mercy holds an elated position. Service and support of the poor are means for cultivating virtuous qualities which are embodied in the cultured man of Vemana's estimation.

That the world reacts to the evils of poverty has been Vemana's sorrowful experience. He has seen how human relationship suffers and bears forth ill-fruits in life due to abject poverty. He says:

“When a man becomes poor, his very sons find fault with him; when he loses his fortune, his wife upbraids him.”

Or,

“In adversity observe well the behaviour of your relations; and when you fall into poverty, look well to your wife's steps.”

The poverty-stricken man is all bitter and full of hatred. His sighs, according to Vemana, are the curses of damnation. Vemana says:

“Those who first excite hopes *in the poor*, and at last say “Go, I have nothing for you;” those sinners, the hard misers, shall lose their hopes and perish.”

# Chapter IV

## THE DELUSION OF LIFE

There can be no self-culturalisation without mental discipline. Human life is no vegetative existence. It is nurtured and sustained by correct thoughts. Feelings and sentiments are no less contributory factors in the making or unmaking of man. The worldly man believes that life is governed by a destiny and he is no more his maker. To protect and control life is beyond human power. Man lives on a make-believe that talismanic influences generating from religious offerings, ceremonials and sacrifices ward off the evil and set aright the course of human life. This is considered by Vemana as an unhuman approach to the understanding of life, and leads to its complications and complexities. He says:

“Fortune-telling, possession *by a demon*, dreams of sleep, idle-wishes and pleasing anguishes, with divinations of all sorts, turn

out true or false, as it may happen, who can rely on them?"

In the struggle for self-culture, man's thoughtlessness about life is a positive hindrance as mere physiological phenomenon. Though biologically human existence is an undeniable fact, it is nevertheless endowed with spirituality. Man thinks that his body is in possession of a soul but he does not think beyond that and does nothing in the way of awakening its power. He thus fails to recognise the significance of the inter-relationship of the body and the spirit. It is for his own good, if the wisdom of this truth dawns upon him, effecting a profound change in his outlook and living. The pure physical existence of man, with no glow of spirituality, is a meaningless phenomenon. Vemana says:

“We constantly pour water over our bodies and wash, feed and dress them; how many cares we suffer for the perishable body!”

Human awareness of such limitations of life makes man responsible for not effecting changes in his mental and emotional cast. It is his worldly engrossment that stands as a stumbling block in the headway of a culturalised existence and makes him lose his way in the labyrinth of misdirected life. Vemana has always exposed the shallowness of such human attitude or behaviour. What the worldly man considers as the reality of life is looked upon by Vemana as its deception. He says:

“Sons and wives are mere delusions; pleasure and pain are a deception; a family and affections we feel are unreal: thou hast filled this delusive life with empty forms.”

These are considered by man as the boons of life, but Vemana sees in them no real substance. He says:

“Like as what is written in water remains not, so are all the blessings of this life unstable.”

It is the mentality of worldly man that he never thinks in terms of what he is and what he can become. His thinking and living is restricted to worldly matters alone. The reason for such indifference towards his own real life is due to the fact that “we reflect not on our coming and going, or on dying; these we consider inevitable; we rove at random; like grasshoppers we leap into the flame.”

Vemana finds it strange that worldly man gives no place of importance to the peace of heart in the scheme of human culturalisation. He gets, or does not even get enough in the world, but he attains on no account the bliss of heart. He in vain searches for it. Only the shadow of blissful peace seems to dog his footsteps, but he is indifferent to it. At long last, a day comes in his life when he desperately struggles with all his fours to attain the peace of heart. When such a day comes for him, there is no vestige of bliss but disappointment, and he is a ruined man. Vemana has seen the state of such a perturbation in the life of man:

“For this body, devoid of perpetuity, they bear perpetual pain; but never will they take any pains to attain the abode of eternal bliss.”

The reason accounted for this is:

“We are imprisoned in delusion: our inclinations are chains; *empty* distinctions are the shackles attached to us: when shall be the deliverance from this life of bondage?”

The path of quietism lies in the realisation that “if thou knowest the nature of life, and that it consists in the temporary union of soul and body, never shall thy mind perish in delusion. If thou knowest the Deity, wisdom shall shine within thee, after the light hath arisen darkness shall no more remain.”

# Chapter V

## FALSE APPROACH TO LIFE

Vemana has been an ardent opponent of a view of life that brings about its own disintegration or ruination. He believes in the beneficial nature of the order of life. It is erroneous to draw an inference that human existence needs no searchings for a new path of life. It has been Vemana's aim to make man humanise himself with a view to creating new feelings of individual as well as social welfare. To let man live a separate existence from the world is to encourage in him non-human qualities. Vemana never wishes to see the upcoming of such qualities. The cardinal principle of his teachings is to culturalise man and to humanise his personality.

Living in the world as a free man, not as a slave, human culturalisation can be accomplished by him. The world is a testfield for him. His making or un-making, his success or failure, his well-being or misery

has to do with the world, but, according to Vemana, worldliness is a positive hindrance in the way of man's cultural uplift. The battle of self-culture that he has to fight can only be fought within the four corners of his world. Thus the training-ground for man is the world. Vemana says :

“If he leaves his house and his wife, binds his loins with iron, and gives up all inclinations for meal and drink, if he chooses to live in solitude, will this gain him heaven?’

Vemana attempts to re-establish a new relationship between man and the world and makes him feel the sense of oneness of all life in the world. Living: under the spell of one indivisible life, a man is in a better position to understand himself and the world. He says:

“False is the creed of those who hold that it is profitable to renounce the present life’ cannot ye see that eternal existence commences in this life.”

To renounce the world is a non-human act. The man who aspires for the ideal of renunciation does not see his own human way, while living in the world. His leaving the world for the sake of attaining spiritual bliss is a moonshine. Vemana has never been enamoured of the ideal of world-renunciation. The renouncers, he has known intimately. They appear to him to be engaged in the search for a new life of peace

but actually they live under delusion. In the opinion of Vemana, renouncing the world does not add a wee bit to the value of human culture. Instead, worldly renunciation fills their life with empty contents. They are in fact the beggars of life. Theirs is not the heart of renouncers. Even in their hearts there is no spark or warmth of humanity. What they have achieved are only external signs of mendicancy, attached to their persons.

Vemana has his own doubts about their claims. He abhors their mendicant mentality.

“They desert their own town and land, and devoid of the smallest love and affection, with repulsive manners, they leave both wives and sons, to suffer misery and to what end is it?”

Vemana never likes renouncers as mendicants. He thinks that they have not understood the meaning of life and their life is a wasteful existence. “Their manners are vulgar” is the expression, used by Vemana, meaning thereby that they are putting up false standards before the world. Their way of life is a sham living and even their methods are unpraiseworthy. Vemana has been all gall and wormhood when he speaks of them :

“He leaves the towns and villages and unweariedly roams the wilds, as though this were only extraordinary merit; how shall

the simpleton who feeds on roots and herbs attain to the abode of bliss?"

Or,

"A breviary, matted locks, a tiger skin, a staff, a reliquary and so forth, he merely has the trouble of carrying these about; they can never effect his salvation."

Or,

"Shaven heads, and a dress of white wollen, smearing with ashes, and disgusting bodies; Truly such habiliments are used for the sake of the belly alone!"

Or,

"*Sanyasis* acquaint themselves with particular words and vests; they wear a brick-red garb and shaven pates; on these they pride themselves; their heads look very pure, but are their hearts so?"

Or,

"He who assumes a tinted cloak and imitates great hermits, laying aside every external wish, he who pretends to walk thus is the hypocritical *Sanayasi*!"

Vemana has also known different categories of *Faqirs*. He has seen in them nothing but fraud, deceit

and make-up. He exposes them to the public gaze. The people who esteem and honour Faqirs should understand that esteem and honour are not meant for Faqirs who should be detested as they mislead the world. The high ideal of life is set at naught by them. Vemana always looks down upon them. His belief is that "to give food and apparel and lie about in the porches of temples, is the fate written for their sins in the foreheads of monks. What would they be the worse for familiarity with women?"

The Faqirs are sinners. They have not learnt the ways of culturalisation and failed to quieten their hearts. As a 'humanity' they have gone out of alignment, though the world believes in them as spiritualists. Vemana has strongly felt that the Fate has cursed them to live a life of beggary, bereft of spiritual enlightenment. He says:

"He who walks not in self-denial in his heart, and only prides himself on the grace of a shaven head, lives for the sake of his belly, with an evil mind."

Or,

"If their heart be set aright, what is the good of regular ordination as a monk. Scholars are ignorant of this that the heart is the only basis of salvation."

# Chapter VI

## THE WAY OF FALSE LIFE

Since earliest times the idea has been gaining ground in the world of Indian thought and the belief deepening in the hearts of the people that among the disciplines, the Yoga as a means of disciplining life stands pre-eminent. The ancient schools of Yoga have conducted researches in the domain of human life and taught the world many a precious lesson in the secret powers of man, culturalised by Yogic discipline. But the path of Yoga is beset with difficulties and hardships. For this reason, Yoga has not become a popular 'science' in India. A true Yogi is he who succeeds in keeping the balance of physical, emotional and mental forces in perfect order in himself. The common man of the world cannot become a Yogi, as it is no easy task to control and master the forces of the body and mind. But, in spite of it, the idea persists in the Indian world that the Yogi is the best man, for he has conquered life. He who follows Yogic ways develops

in himself Yogic qualities, but the socio-cultural history of our country amply substantiates that the real Yogi and a false Yogi are two distinct personalities, at times completely contradictory to each other. That is to say, those who are ignorant of Yogic ideal yet having faith in the integrity of Yogic discipline are no real Yogis as they have not mastered life. But, nevertheless, the Yogic ideal as a means of conquering life does not lose its intrinsic value in the schools of self-discipline. It may be possible that a handful of Yogis in the country have really attained salvation through the means of the Yoga, but such sublime personalities keep themselves aloof from the world and are hardly visible. What is generally seen of such 'personalities' as Yogis are their worldly prototypes, who are deception-personified. Such Yogis do not benefit the world but worldly men are misled by them and often ruined by their false instructions.

Vemana has ample experience of such worldly Yogis and anchorites of his times, and has been all disgust and wrath at their sight. He has seen in them no craving or struggle for realising the truth about life. They have only learnt to torment their bodies but have not known the secret of self-culture. Vemana says:

“The sons of the Kalayuga are unable to attain to heaven: they vex their bodies with austere penance; why? they are ignorant of the truth.”

Their Yoga of Life is, in fact, only a farcical expression of human existence. Vemana says about the Yōgi:

“You bend your arms and legs *according to rule*, and fill your bodies with air, *holding your breath*: sometimes crawling and again standing. The religious postures are mere tricks that are learnt.”

The picture of a worldly Yogi has been painted by Vemana in these lines:

“The wretched ascetic pushes out his belly, winks his eyes, and strains with all his body! He is like a sheep bound for sacrifice and no better.”

Vemana has advised the men of the world not to follow in the foot-steps of the anchorites. He says:

“Be not like those haughty monks who imagine that by *the gestures appointed* for respiration, inspiration, and retention of the breath, they have attained to wisdom. In the absence of inward vision boast not of mere oral divinity.”

Or,

“Religion that consists in contriving various postures and twisting the limbs is just one straw inferior to the exercises of the wrestler.”

This shows that the Yoga of the Yogis and the penance of the anchorites do not possess any inherent charm even from the point of view of body building, though it is believed that they hold the key to spirituality. From the standpoint of self-culturalisation, the Yoga is proved to be futile. Hence Vemana says :

“Those false ascetics who are unable to stay their heart, let their thoughts dwell on a woman: how unprofitable is their life! To what end were they born?”

But a culturalised human personality is an embodiment of a perfect and exalted ‘Yogi’ for whom Vemana has great respect:

“He who has truly vanquished his lusts, shall, by knowing the truth, be converted into truth. Thus shall he shine illustrious as the exalted Yogi.”

Or,

“The man of a calm mind, whose disposition is benign as a cool *temperature*, he is the perfect Yogi. Such a man shall very soon attain to *holy* liberty.”

# Chapter VII

## THE BONDS OF LIFE

Generally, the believers of God say that ritualism is an obstacle in the way of divine belief. To consider ritualism as divine worship is a snare or make-believe in which man is caught for ever and debarred from the effulgence of divine light. It is admitted on all hands that between the followers of ritualism and the believers of God there can be no comparison. Ritualism creates a state of spiritual darkness in man; while the worship of God helps in enlivening the hidden spiritual powers in him. In the former man is doomed; in the latter he discovers himself.

It is the belief of the common man that religion, without the substratum of ritualism, cannot be followed. It is considered as a form of 'religion', but the believers of God overthrow it as a useless practice. The ritualistic way of life has no essence or glow of spirituality, as there is no meeting ground between ritualism and spirituality. The aperture of 'inward

vision' gets opened through spirituality; while ritualism is gross worldliness. The worldly men are perfectly satisfied, when they are made to discharge various duties in terms of ritualism.

Human discord is bred by ritualism, but the worship of God creates unity between man and man without the distinction of religion or community. The cleavage of differences between man and man is due to different ritualistic 'beliefs' and not the fundamental pervading all religions of the world. The worship of God is the fundament of all religions, leading to the oneness of humanity. It is the ritualistic 'belief', or 'faith' that creates the gulf of disunity and hatred among all 'followers.'

Vemana's unfaltering belief has been that the worship of God keeps alive the principle of the unity of man, while ritualism distorts, vitiates and even destroys the sense of oneness of humanity. The path of worldly good lies in ritualism, but the attainment of virtue peace and bliss is beyond it. Vemana says:

"Your religious rites, however numerous, are mere entanglements: these give you no power to loose the bondage of the soul. He alone is a saint who obtained freedom."

In the opinion of Vemana, the ritualistic mentality or life leads to the spiritual dormancy of man. He gives expression to these thoughts in his own unique manner:

“Bald heads! matted locks! daubing with ashes, harangues, postures and a religious garb; No man is a saint who is not pure within.”

He has no sense of appreciation for religious ceremonies of the world and the ritualistic ways of religious leaders. He has detected in their lives the perpetuation of sham and deception. The way of self-culturalisation is no path for a common man who is entangled in ritualism as worldliness. For him, materialism is real and akin to life, but the principle of spirituality is a dead gospel. In reality, the ritualistic ‘beliefs’ of the common man of the world thrive on materialism. Such a life has been a thorn in the eyes of Vemana. It has been his earnest desire to efface the evil of ritualism from the life of man: He says:

“What are you the better for smearing your body with sacred ashes? Your thoughts should rest on God alone; otherwise an ass can wallow in dirt as well as you!”

Ritualism is differentiative, misleading and defective. He says:

“All this smearing *your bodies* with *holy ashes*, these *sectarian* decorations on your shoulders and entire creeds, are of no avail in this world alone, not in the next.”

It has been the belief of Vemana that man has become neglectful of the ‘well-being’ in the hereafter

life due to the hold of ritualism. Worldly beliefs are of no avail and do not help him in securing the Here-after. Considering religious ceremonies as futile and stupid, Vemana says:

“You call it “food of your ancestors,” but you call the crows together, with all kindness, and give it to them, ye formal professors! What is the good of charity to crows? Give rather to the godd men?”

The same idea is further elucidated in this manner:

“O ye asses! why do you make balls of food and give them to the crows in the name of your ancestors? How can a dung-eating crow be an ancestor of yours?”

Vemana has described in the following lines the height of stupidity in adhering to ritualism:

“His forehead is that of a worshipper, his mouth that of a wolf; and his heart that of a roaming demon: is he so shameless as to say he has learnt of the divinity?”

Ritualism is an effective instrument in uprooting the worship of God. He says:

“God regards not our country or our garb; He dwells in the soul, intimately entwined therewith; an *assumed* garb is merely for the sake of the belly.”

Or,

“The daily prayers and the brahmanical cord are wanting both at birth and at the time of death.”

Ritualistic ‘beliefs’ do not lessen but encourage superstitions in the life of man. Such a life presents a low form of worship. Vemana says:

“Quietism is the highest means of attaining *absorption*: the possession of the intellect is middle grade: postures and other superstitious rites are the lowest degree of worship.”

The ritualistic principle of life is actually a deculturalising force in the making of man. Vemana says:

“Observations void of purity of heart! to what end are they? To what end the preparation of food without cleansing the vessel?”

Ritualism is worldly and mammon is its worship:

“After religiously bathing and drawing the line and the streak in his forehead, and trimly putting on a tinted vest should he chance to see a courtesan, he forgets all his vows.”

# Chapter VIII

## THE WANDERING OF LIFE

The worldly men have been made to believe in the 'blessedness' of pilgrimage. With such a belief in their hearts, they make pilgrimages and feel gratified that their religious duties and obligations have been well discharged. People go to the length of believing that pilgrimage washes away their sins and their life becomes a virtuous living. The *darshan* of holy places, it is believed, tantamounts to spiritual peace, but the wisdom-knowing feel and think about it differently.

They see in the places of pilgrimage such scenes that create a feeling of repulsion in human heart. For them, the place of pilgrimage is not the House of God but it is Satan that resides there. Even the wise men of our country have witnessed the degradation and disgrace of human life in such holy places, where, instead of spiritual comfort and light, man's life assumes a false pretence of religiosity in the form of stark ritualism. Thus, the pseudo-religion enacts itself

with all its ever-recurring scenes. How can man achieve peace in his heart in the places, of pilgrimage has been a tormenting experience of Vemana. To his mind, making a pilgrimage is an index of mental aberration. If man has not befriended himself from such a psychological confusion-worse-confoundedness, he will always remain enwrapped in darkness. Evaluating pilgrimage in the light of human welfare, Vemana comes to the conclusion that it is nothing less than a make-believe on the part of man to harbour good thoughts about pilgrimage. Vemana says:

“Casi, Madura, Conjevaram, Gaya, Prayag, Setu; though a man visit all these holy places with an ardent mind, what benefit does he derive? this is mere drudgery!”

In the culturalisation of man, pilgrimage is not any good.

It signifies only drudgery or trouble one is put to. Vemana says:

“To what end is that you plunge in the holy waters: why go and touch sacred places? Why attempt to worship the deity while your bellies are full of foul hypocrisy.”

Or,

“Though you bear about the sacred water of Benares and your feet and faces swell with

the heat of travel, devoid of repose, how shall you after death attain heaven *by such means!*"

Or,

"Why make projects, saying, I will go to Casi (Benares)? Why long after the noble holy springs? How shall that Benares (heaven) be attained by the evil doer?"

Or,

"Though you roam from land to land, how can this fix religion in your heart? How can travelling about for the sake of alms gain you heaven?"

Or,

"Wherever you roam, whatever toils you undergo: your fate is unalterable and still follows you: though the land, you wander in be new to you, you remain the same."

Or,

"Though a Turk go to the sacred hill of Tripety, he does not become a palmer. Going on pilgrimage to Benares will not make a modest woman of a prostitute."

Or,

“Though he roam to Concan, no dog will turn into a lion; going to Benares will make no pig an elephant; and no pilgrimage will make a saint of one whose nature is different.”

Vemana clears the point that the pilgrimage produces no change in the heart of man. So long as there is evil and hatred in human heart, it is of no consequence to undertake a pilgrimage. Thus his evil nature comes in the way of self-culturalisation and deprives him of the benefits of humanisation. Such a man is disgraced and condemned as he has not realised the significance of self-culture in as much as the heart of man is the abode for the worship of God.

To search for God in the holy places is a silly act of man. He says:

“Benares! Benares!” cry they and delight to travel there: yet is not the same God here as there? If thy heart be right, He is there and here also.”

Vemana assures:

“The source of final happiness is inherent in the heart: he is a fool who seeks it elsewhere *as at holy places and pilgrimages.*”

Or,

“Fools roam to holy places imagining that the deity is not to be found where they dwell;

they merely exercise their limb and squander their money: they are ruined, and so return home.”

Men should understand that

“To what end is this toil of pilgrimages to the confluence of rivers, to holy streams, and round the rocks of the mountains? They know not that God dwells in their own body.”

Instead of making pilgrimage, man should delve deep in the recesses of his heart with a view to realising the truth of the worship of God. Vemana describes such thoughts in these lines:

“Though we roam the wilds, sanctity is not in them; nor is it in the sky; nor on earth in the confluence of holy streams. Make thy body pure and thou shall behold the King.”

The very idea of pilgrimage is of a tantalising nature. Thus the life of man is engaged in sham activities. Such a man lives without the true spirit of religion. In this way, the process of self-culturalisation is hindered.

# Chapter IX

## THE DISGRACE OF LIFE

The ignorant man is not conscious of the powers of self-culturalisation. The dynamic conception of life is a hidden secret for him. He is a plaything of super-human and human factors. He ever remains unaware of the fact that such human power if developed or culturalised, leads to human perfection. It is a great pity that the worldly man knows nothing about human 'blossoming'. He has never been instructed in the lessons of real living. His 'religion' even does not teach him how it makes man perfect. He sees everything in the world except that he does not see the making of man as a culturalised personality. The attainment of a self-culturalised personality is beyond his perception and understanding.

Laws of social immobility function in accordance with their 'patterns' and 'structures', and are instrumental in degrading man and society. But if one were to ponder upon the variegated aspects of social

life the conclusion becomes inescapable that society in some way or other is playing hide-and-seek with Man. Thus man gets ensnared in the loops of social deception.

The wisdom-knowing men of the world have always felt that morality should be taught and religion given to the dormant man for his re-awakening, so that human life may be saved from disgrace and degradation.

Such attempts at human re-awakening have been made in every age and country. They have brought home the message that so long as man does not struggle to realise his own self, the principle of morality, the precept of religion, and the worship will exist independently of him and will have no control over him. In fact, morality, religion and worship can function with human life in an integrated sense and not beyond the periphery of human conduct. If a cursory glance is cast at the life of worldly man, it becomes clear that, though he seems to have faith in morality, religion and worship, he considers them independent of his person. That is the reason why he cannot become a true adherent of morality, a firm follower of religion and a devout worshipper of God. It is common observation that morality, and worship are considered essential for him but his actual living betrays that neither the principles of morality nor the precepts of religion nor the essentials of divine worship have any influence on his life. He remains only a creature of the world, whose tongue repeats parrotlike such words as morality,

religion or God to satisfy his 'whims'. His heart has not imbibed the spirit of the commandments of morality, religion and God. He only worships the world. Morality, religion and worship are his delusions. The cause for such human behaviour is that man has not understood his own reality. The social influence or pressure of morality, religion and worship is being exerted upon him, with the result that he does not feel their living presence in his own life. This lack of self-education has only made him conversant with the worldly meaning of morality, religion and worship. Thus worldly human life gropes in darkness and chases after its shadows.

The wise men of the world have often exposed the fallacy of such human demeanour. To them, morality, religion and worship are no empty concepts or false words. They embody life itself. In this struggle of determining morality, religion and worship as different phases of human life, Vemana has also been engaged and he has poignantly felt that such a delusionary state of human existence does positive harm to man. As a human being, he cannot be allowed to drift on the ocean of immorality, irreligion and false worship.

Morality and religion are no idle thoughts. They are the different phases of inherent human power. The key-note of Vemana's thought-world is to set into motion the principles of human preservation and culturalisation. He is not against religion or morality or worship. His own life has been a living example of a

true follower of religion or a devout worshipper of God as the noblest way to serve humanity. From Vemana's standpoint the un-moral basis of life hinders adherence to religion as well as the worship of God and is a stumbling block in the way of humanisation. This is the chief reason why Vemana considers the irreligious principle as derogatory to life.

In the eyes of Vemana the "*shirk*" with life is a low idea that pulls down human status. Idol-worship is a "*shirk*" according to Vemana.

He has been well aware of the psychology of idol-worship. Having perfect faith in the worship of God, the sham of idol-worship dawns upon him. The idol-worshipping world has been an open secret to him. Vemana has known how man falls a prey to the 'machinations' and 'subterfuges' of idol-worship. He has closely studied the different stages from idol-making to idol-worship. He says:

"You call clay over the waxen mould, melt it, and form a certain figure: fill the hollow *with melted metal*, and set up the statue as a sign; then people assemble and call this a God."

In this connection his views are as follows:

"What can we think of the fools who bring mountain stones together, knock them about with their hands and feet, and after

tormenting them with mason's chisels, bow down to the rugged blocks?"

Or,

"Why collect *slabs* of marble, build temples with them, and delight in worship stones? What profit have you of adoring a stone?"

Drawing a comparison between idol-worship and the worship of God, Vemaṇa observes:

"One real good sapphire is enough, why collect a basketful of glittering, sparkling stones?"

Or,

"A man makes a stone image and sets it up in dignity and worships it! He is devoid of sense. He cannot comprehend the deity that dwells with him!"

Or,

"O make not a stone image, to be put in a dark chamber and worshipped! Oh ignorant creatures, know ye not that the deity dwells in the heart alone!"

Or,

"Why should you collect stones from the hill and build fine temples to walk about in them? Why torment yourselves so, while

the God as living being, constantly dwells within you?"

Or,

"O ye senseless creatures, who bow down to stones imagining that the deity exists therein! cease from these ideas. It may be in living things, but what is there in a stone?"

Or,

"While he who is *alone* honourable dwells with your own fleshy bodies, why should ye heap up *offerings* in temples made of stone. How can Gods made of stone feed on those heaps?"

Or,

"If you see a bull made of marble, you bow down ceremoniously to it; but if you see a trotting bullock you *do not scruple* to beat it, surely the worshippers of the bull are wretched sinners!"

Or,

"How should those who adore the living principle still honour image made of stone?"

Vemana has not seen the good of man in idol-worship. His belief is:

"He that bows to a stone shall become like a lifeless image."

Idol-worship eventually smothers human qualities.

# Chapter X

## THE INSTINCTS OF LIFE

The religionist, the educationist and the moralist hold that the culturalisation of human instincts is essential; otherwise there will be no difference between man and animal. Animal instincts are manifestations of crude and naked desires. Though human life also smacks of animality, it is the force of culturalisation that humanises instincts to a considerable extent. Society, in every age, has culturalised man through the agencies of religion, morality or education, so that, instead of animality, 'humanised' instincts have their free play for individual as well as social progress. The humanisation of instincts is the criterion of progress.

Religion has found out the way of human culturalisation through the worship of God. Morality has given a message that man is not a brute but a social being who, after sublimating his instincts and living in

co-operation and goodwill with his fellowbeings, can have virtues to his share. Education teaches that so long as man does not understand himself, he cannot be a master of himself. For knowing oneself knowledge is needed. Knowledge is power that makes man his own master and enthuses him to establish human relations with the world. Thus the religionist, the educationist and the moralist, each in his own way, help man in culturalising his crude instincts so that the human ideal of fellowship, co-operation and concord becomes a reality. They have, in fact, stopped man from degenerating into an animal and raised him to a high human pedestal. The cultured man is not a victim of his instincts. Humanised culture is his life-experience.

Vemana has given no scope for the free outlet of 'naked' instincts in his scheme of self-culturalisation. His attempt has been to transform the animal instincts of man into humanised desires with a view to raising human status. The difference between virtue and vice is effected by the result of the sublimation or domination of crude instincts. Vemana has viewed the desires of life from such an angle of vision. In the upcoming of vice unsocial and unhuman factors help hinder the culturalisation of human instincts. Vemana says:

“Like as the fish in the waters, through the desire of the delicious bait is fixed on the hook and perishes: so is a man, if seized with desire is also ruined.”

Or,

“Vain desire suffers not to attain our end; it only plunges us in troubles, and drag us along; it prevents faith from being born in men.”

The result of which is that

“through strong desire do men wander all the days of their life, unable to rid themselves of delusion; like to flies that settle on a vessel defiled *with wine*.”

Or,

“During life he restrains not his lusts, but when death approaches he turns recluse; unless thou subdue thy heart, how shalt thou attain release.”

Crude instincts in the shape of vices take possession of man and render him useless as a human being. These can be neutralised by virtuous thinking and living. The bad qualities of instincts do not disappear of their own accord but it is through the force of culturalisation that they can be sublimated. The sublimated instincts find expression in humanised thinking and action. In order to overcome the brute in man, the knowledge of the attributes of virtue and the wickedness of vice is a desideratum. Vemana says:

“He who neither eats for himself, nor will let his friends approach, the vicious brute, is

like to a lifeless image (scarecrow) made and set up in a field.”

Or,

“It is easy to feel pleasure in the conversation of the learned; but it is more hard to extend the hand and give a farthing; he can easily advise others to be liberal, but cannot become so himself.”

Such thoughts of Vemana throw light on human conduct as governed by virtue or vice. The miser and the generous are the two typical examples of man who, in the one, is ruined by natural instincts and who, in the other, is saved by humanised instincts. The miser and the generous are the psychological specimens of man. Vemana has tested and weighed them both in the scale of humanism. He has seen in the miser a withered human personality and in the generous a full-blossomed man.

Hence Vemana says that generosity is an attribute of human development and miserliness is a phase of human degradation. In the same manner, he has brought to light the evil consequences resulting from casting aspersion on man. He depicts the slanderous man in the following lines:

“A medicine may always be found somewhere in the world to heal wounds received in front. But hath any remedy been found to heal the wounds of slanderous words?”

Cruelty is the outcome of evil according to Vemana. It leads to killing. The voice of pathos in human heart gets choked up by the sword of cruelty. The feelings of cruelty have a deadening influence on the personality of man. Vemana gives expression to these ideas in the following lines:

“All killing of animals is a sin against Siva;  
Consider all animals as forms of the deity;  
indeed every living creature, if sinless, is as  
a God.”

Or,

“How wicked are the cruel who venture to  
kill oxen: they will certainly meet with  
retribution.”

Vemana has always seen vicious effects accruing from greed in the life of man and has been all sorrow at the sight of a greedy man. To him, greed is the worst phase of human character. He says:

“Covetousness is a sin of the worst nature.”

Cruelty and greed give full license to the barbarity of human instincts and put man on a crooked road. Vemana has sad experience of the vicious mentality of the people who, while ignoring their own blemishes, are bent on finding fault with others. They indulge in uncommendable acts. Their eyes are set on picking up the vices of others and their habit in-season and out-

season is to exaggerate and perpetuate vice. But if their own vices are counted or taken into account they flare up like a beast. Vemana says:

“There are crowds of these who reckon the faults of others: yet every one in the world has his failings. Those who look to the faults of others are often ignorant of their own.”

Vemana has been much grieved to see man who, in his thoughtlessness, harbours evil thoughts about others. Vemana says:

“His own disposition remaining *unaltered* in him, he concerns himself to weigh in his mind the temper of another! He who, himself yet ignorant of his own nature, laments only for his neighbour, is a fallen creature, O Vema!”

According to Vemana, it is a sign of degradation for man to point out the weaknesses of others when he himself is a bundle of weaknesses. Such a mentality tends to augment in him anti-social desires which eventually get the upper hand in his life. This is the result of his stupid thoughts. Vemana says:

“How apt men are to fall into foolish whims!”

Evil thoughts forestall false promises. In the promises of the virtuous there is truthfulness, as they

speak truth and shun falsehood. But the ill-speaking man, due to viciousness, is untrue and false. Vemana says:

“If thou use the words of hypocrisy, how shalt thou attain beatitude? Thy vain babbling shall never pass as good: this is no dignified undertaking, but only a fruitless inclination.”

Or,

“All *their* words are a lie, *their* whole heart is set on fraud. To what end then is the soul any longer? Of what good is life? If thy word be truth, this is a hundred additional years of life.”

The estimate of a culturalised human existence depends upon the degree of sublimated instincts. Vemana says:

“He that is given up to his senses is the lowest. He that is delivered up to his lusts shall through devotion become medial. He is the best who hath conquered his lusts. He who hath subdued his passions and commandeth himself is (hear me) the mighty Lord!”

“Like as a tree on the river bank is ever unstable”, so is the fate of the stupid man.

For the development of spirituality, the culturalisation of instincts is most essential, He says:

“Unless thou cut away the cords of desire and cast them off, there is no heaven for thee.”

Or,

“When passion leaves thee, wisdom shall be thine.”

Or,

He who is devoted to sensual pleasures shall never know the joys of the next world.”

Vemana knows the nature of man. The most powerful of all instincts that tempts and agitates him is the sexual instinct. Vemana has well said :

“Cupidity makes a man as restless as a dog.”

Or,

“Though the limbs all wither, the teeth drop out and the body tremble with decrepitude; though they be infirm with age, cupidity will never leave man.”

Or,

“There is no torment greater than that of our lusts: unless thou fix thine eye upon it, thou shalt attain no ease: and unless thy heart be fixed, there is no salvation for thee.”

Sexuality is animality.' Having cast a glance at human life, Vemana opines that man should ponder upon the urges and expressions of sexual passions and try to humanise them; otherwise the brute in him lives: Vemana says:

“By *Cupidity*, the green-bowed *god*, are all men in the world suddenly deluded; who, then, *in this respect* is the noble, who is the subject?”

Or,

“What poet or what god is there free from the darts of love? This is mere desire, not love of wisdom. Poets and demi-gods are all mere libertines.”

It is believed that man commits sin through the instrumentality of vice. Though sin is committed, it is nevertheless considered a vice. Ethics or religion also warns man against its committal, but in spite of such injunctions it is being committed by all and sundry. It is in the nature of worldly man to sin. Can he not live without its committal? Or is it a fact that he has not yet known what sin is? The general belief is that sin is what is done against the religious commandments or moral precepts.

Such commandments or precepts are hallowed as sanctimonious. Thus man's difficulty is to determine the limit of a relationship between life and the

'commandments'. For this reason, sin is being committed in the sphere of 'idea-commandments'. Man has not been instructed that sin is not the violation of 'commandments' but against his very life. Hence sin emanates from man against his own self. Vemana says:

What is called sin does not pertain to any particular place; it is attached to (or mingled with) our own acts. It is better, then, to keep one's eyes open, than to be a laborious performer of *meritorious* works."

Performance of religious duties does not wash off sin, but virtuous living effaces it. Vemana describes the idea of sin effecting human life in the following lines:

"There is no greater sin than that of falsehood: this is an abomination perpetually in the mouth."

In the opinion of Vemana, natural human instincts are responsible for the committal of sin. It is the cultivation of human goodness that neutralises the evil of sin. Vemana says:

"Though a fool worthy of death fall into thy hand, afflict him not. Conciliation by goodness and bid him depart. This is death to him."

Vemana sees the end of sin in the correction of human actions and points out that sin has nothing to do with instincts. He says:

“All our passions originate in the heart: but emancipation from sin is inconsistent with these desires. Can ye not see that the soul is one with the divinity?”

This means that sin is hidden in human actions. The tendencies and thoughts of the time and age make men sinners as well e.g. the degradation of human actions is in the hands of the time and age. If a sinner has to improve his lot, he has to fight hard against the time and age and by fighting he can overcome the force of sin. Vemana says:

“Sinful creatures are all subject to time.”

Or,

“If misfortune befall him, the sinner reviles the deity: if he meets with good, he lauds himself for it: but evil and good are the *result of his own acts.*”

Or,

“Let him study what he will, or listen to *the holy texts*, the sinner will not relinquish his evil nature.”

Sinching is another name for the worship of animality. Vemana says:

“From his birth upwards let a man constantly beware of sin, let him not become degraded to a brute; but grow old in holiness and attain to bliss.”

The making of man is in the liquidation of evil actions and in the creation of good actions. Though Vemana's eyes detect a dearth of virtuous man in the world, he nevertheless praises such a small humanity to the skies. These men of virtuous qualities are paragons. Vemana shows his surprise at the paucity of such men in the following lines:

“Nowhere do we see one who knows his own heart; he who knows his heart is rarely found.”

By mastering the powers of heart, man attains the highest bliss. Vemana says:

“He who undertakes to subdue his heart shall find comfort therein: at last he shall see the abode of beatitude (mocsha)?”

Vemana's belief is:

*“Though the principles in which beatitude originates exist in our own heart, all men who are unable to know their hearts and to restrain their minds, vanish in death.”*

Here Vemana feels sorry for that man who cannot attain the bliss of heart. Such a human personality

has been born to die only and not to enjoy the bliss. The chief peculiarity of a peaceful heart is that it keeps in tact its balance of formative forces. Mere vegetative human existence does not help in promoting the peace of heart. The man of heart believes in the dynamics of self-culture as his ideal. Vemana says:

“They cannot learn that the heart is *the source* of perfection; they are entangled in the lusts and perish; he who is converted into pure mind is the saint who knows the *great secret*.”

Human thoughtlessness or whimsicalities dissipate the power of the heart. It cannot be developed so long as man does not realise its cultural importance. Ignorance of the power of heart tantamounts to human aimlessness.

“The recluseness of a dog! the meditations of a crane! the chanting of an ass! the bathing of a frog! ah, why will ye not try to know your own hearts!”

The peace of heart is no killing of the senses but their culturalisation. Vemana says:

“Till his lusts are quelled, no man is freed from earthly ties: until he is thus freed he is no hermit; unless thou become an ascetic, thy lusts shall not be destroyed.”

About sense-indulgence and sense-killing, Vemana says in his own unique way:

“Food in excess causes death, and too great abstinence endangers life; food, then, is the origin of life and death.”

Moderation strengthens the forces of a peaceful heart. Its complete culturalisation raises man to the highest human pedestal.

Vemana’s belief is that so long as man does not seriously take stock of the evil in him in the light of good actions, the real man in his personality remains hidden from his own eyes. Vemana says:

“Know that sin is always the cause of drooping the head, that all true good originates in the spirit, to comprehend this requires such firmness.”

The sinning human attitude or ‘mannerism’ has always been revolving in Vemana’s mind.

“They possess no foresight before evil actually touches them; until they fall, they know not that they are slipping: these are subjects for punishment, not for mercy: how unwise are the men of the earth?”

Man thinkingly or unthinkingly perpetuates sin but believes that salvation will be his lot if he turns a

religious man at the fag-end of his life. This is all day-dreaming on his part, never to be materialised in his life-time. Vemana says:

“What is the profit of turning religious at the time of death, as if your former state were thereby altered? Your sins remain unchanged and you are none the better.”

The sinner is ignorant of his real human existence. Hence how can there be an iota of substance in his belief, when he is an embodiment of evil? Vemana shows him the way of virtuous living:

“Cease not from friendship of the good: till we understand our fallen nature, we have no faith how shall a sinner attain firmness in faith?”

While addressing the sinners, he observes:

“Let us fear to sin and stand in awe of death. Let us forget the ties of earthly affections, but never let us forget kindness *that we have received.*”

Or,

“Let us forget every sinful connection; let us forget every contention and the faults of others; but never let us forget the good done to us.”

A sinner can become a virtuous man, if he adheres to such précepts. Virtue is human greatness. Vemana does not consider that man is made superior by birth. He says:

“Eminence depends not upon birth, but virtue.”

He further observes:

“Whose is the body, that we should continually nourish it? Whose is the soul that we should be devout to save it? Whose is our wealth? Virtue alone is ours!”

Speaking about virtous deeds, he remarks:

“A good work performed with a pure heart, though small, is not trifling.”

There is a vast difference between the ways of a virtuous man and a sinner. The sinner tomtoms and parades his ‘virtues’ but those of a sober man are screened off from the public gaze, for virtuous living creates sobriety and seriousness in the nature of man who becomes all the more conscious of his own shortcomings, but clandestinely heaps up virtues for his own redemption. The sinner, on the contrary, bolsters up his mean thoughts and piles on evil after evil. The virtuous man is not he who is vaingloricus and takes pride in crediting virtues to his account as his embellishments but whose behaviour with men is based

upon virtuous thought and deed. Only a virtuous man can show regard and consideration for human beings.

Vemana says:

“Whether you speak with the great or with your companions respect and consideration are equally necessary, or evil will befall you will lose your respectability.”

Here Vemana lays emphasis upon a social decorum with a view to raising the importance of human culturalisation for the attainment of virtuous deeds. His note of comparison regarding the wise man and the sinners is uniquely expressed thus:

“Sweet as the cuckoo warbling in a garden are the charming words of the wise; but the words of sinners are vile as the cawing of a crow.”

# Chapter XI

## THE RELIGION AND THE TEACHER

The perfect man is generally recognised as a believer in universal religion. Religion enjoys a pre-eminent position in self-culturalisation. Vemana's belief is that man cannot attain perfection, if he lacks religious culture, and humanisation is not possible without the basis of religion. Humanisation and religion stand on equal footing and supplement each other. But sectarianism as religion is irreligion and ill-fits humanism. Religion as universal humanised force thrives on the idea of the unity of man, irrespective of caste, clan, race and country and binds all men in a common human relationship. The culturalised man is a religion lived. The cardinal principle of religion, the worship of God, is 'man-making.'

The comparative study of all the religions of the world compels one to arrive at an inescapable conclusion that the fundamental principle underlying all

religions is the unity of God and His worship is the foremost duty of every believer. Their forms alone, not their fundamentals, bring out the difference of religion before the common folk who are kept ignorant of the real unifying spirit pervading every religion. Thus the adherence to a formalistic religion is termed as 'worship.' The mental make-up of such a 'worshiper' is instrumental in creating a gulf of disunity and hatred between man and man, but a true saint of any religion rejects its forms as its spirit. His conception of religion, as universal principle, does not harmonise with the sectarian form of 'worship.' Hence his message of religion to his fellow-beings is to comprehend and live religion as the spirit without a form.

Vemana observes that religion is on the lips of every man, but few understand its intrinsic meaning. The world teaches 'religion' and man 'learns' it, but it is seldom found that such religious teaching contributes to the building of a character or the making of a personality. It is common observation that even the so-called religious heads as well as teachers are not commendable specimens of humanity. Vemana says:

"It is easy to talk, but hard to the mind; we may teach others, but cannot ourselves understand: it is easy to lay hold on the sword, but hard to become valiant."

Vemana bears no grudge against the teachers of religions, but their shallow and shady life is what

astounds him most. He has been all appreciation for a real teacher, who is aptly fit to guide man safely on the road of self-culture. He who poses as a teacher of man but fails to self-culturalise himself is a false and vile teacher, whom Vemana detests from the core of his heart.

He says:

“A false teacher restrains us in all our acts.”

Or,

“The teacher who is unable to show the path of holiness to his disciples and plunges them in an evil creed, his wisdom is that like that of a bullock entangled in a field of maize.”

Or,

“The teacher, of sinful nature, who cannot clear thine eyes, and with the subtle flame illumine the darkness of sin, *this teacher is no better than a brute.*”

Or,

“The teacher who has *in his own esteem* become pure, and yet has not devoted his entire heart to God, is the vilest of instructors: he is like him who should attempt to ride the ring on a blind horse.”

The real teacher of Vemana's estimation is a guide-philosopher to man.

“He who is a teacher will instruct others regarding God; he will plainly reveal the celestial bodies; he looks well to his pupil, and dissipates the darkness of his ignorance.”

Or,

“When a man has found a superior spiritual teacher, he shall show him happiness, *as distinctly as though it were* in the palm of his hand.”

In the same strain, he doubts whether the studies of a religious teacher can be of any avail for his ultimate end:

“A young man is unable to see the recondite form of God. Can enjoy no comfort, but studies excessively: why does he study that which would teach him how to die.”

The religious teachers sacrifice their lives in vain at the altar of death, but succeed not in solving the problem of death. Vemana says:

“After learning all other branches of wisdom men remain ignorant that they are to die and be reproduced: alas! they perish without knowing anything of impending destruction.”

The ignorance of the learned in the search for Truth is described by Vemana in the following lines:

“The fool says, “I know, I have learned!” he slavishly follows the creed of works. He cannot see the truth when it is plainly revealed to him.”

His great pride in his own intellect without any traces of understanding or wisdom is a hindrance in his self-development. Vemana is right when he says:

“Let no one be called wise who is devoid of understanding: *his untrinsic value shall be considered.*”

Reading the books of religion is not enough, nor does it help to fathom the secret of life. Vemana says:

“They read the entire (sastras) institutes, they transcribe them; these they can understand; but of death they know nothing! To what end is study that teaches us not how to die.”

Or,

“Reading without understanding, or feeling that delight in wisdom which is most refined of all, he is plunged in ignorance. How shall this man know every recondite mystery.”

Or,

“The books that are called the Vedas are like courtezans deluding men and wholly unintelligible.”

Or,

“What are you the better for listening to the Vedas and Sastras? You roam from house to house, and then die. Learn the greatness of God and verily you shall live.”

The mere study of holy books does not solve the problem of human end as man makes no attempt for self-enlightenment. Vemana says:

“Without personal experience, the mere savor of the scripture will not remove the fears of the aspirant; as darkness is never dispelled by a mere painted flame.”

Or,

“Though he has read all that can be read, and be an acute disputant, never shall the hypocrite attain to final happiness. His meditations are like those of the dog on the dunghill.”

Or,

“All acts that performed under a false guise are but *paths* leading to death: why is all this labour undergone to fill the belly?”

Or,

“Those who look upon this excellent knowledge with scorn, and learn only abstruse sciences, shall not attain it; they shall never know the society of the good and wise, but shall, as strangers to *virtue*, ultimately fall into misery.”

Vemana has attempted to falsify human belief in a bookish religion. Man thinks that religion is mere learning or instructions and no living. Vemana's belief is that religion is not book, but life. It is no construction of words, no printed pages or letters, no talisman of words even. If religion there is, then it is in man. Its mainspring is man; its foundation is man; its culturalisation is man; and its degradation, if there be, is man. To understand it is as difficult as to understand man. Its message is as simple as difficult. It depends upon man how he understands it. The true follower of religion feels that

“without a teacher learning cannot be accurately gained,”

but

“The men of the earth trust to themselves, and will listen to no *teacher* of righteousness.”

Vemana has been well aware of the crooked

mentality of the worldly man, whom he describes as follows:

“To the teacher they will not give a mess of stale food, but on a courtesan they will bestow their whole wealth: ah! is the doctor more degraded than the dancer?”

In fact the teacher is:

“Know him who is the teacher of the worlds and the instructor of the people; hereby shall ye attain release (mocsha): by not looking to the teacher, they have fallen into the pit of hell.”

To know or follow religion is not possible without a Teacher. Hence Vemana praises him in the following lines:

“The teacher is the root of all; the disciples of a teacher are the branches: men can seldom discern the *really excellent* teacher in the world.”

His very thought is expressed by him in a monotheistic strain:

“The great spirit is our instructor, the intelligent living creature is the learner: he is the real teacher who duly applies to each other the qualities of the preceptor and learner. He who has cut off his desires, who has

quenched the fire of passions, who has bound up his loins and crushed all anger; he who has attained to the great secret is the teacher of teachers.”

The real teacher knows and lives religion. Hence religion is not in the learning, but in the life of the teacher who keeps it alive and enthuses man with a real sense of living. Vemana has always lived in harmony with the spirit of an universal religion as a real teacher of man.

# Chapter XII

## THE WORSHIP OF GOD AND MAN

**M**an is created for divine worship. Its abode is human heart, not mind. Without devout feelings and sentiments divine worship cannot be done. Vemana says:

“However many modes of worship we reckon up, no adoration, devoid of faith, is of avail. Faithful homage is the only true means of attainment.”

Belief thrives in human heart, and God resides therein. Vemana says:

“A man roams and rambles and turns back unsatisfied; he has therein obtained nothing his heart desires; he who has fixed *unalterably* his inmost heart, go to, he is the divinity.”

Hence the struggle of the heart is the struggle for the worship of God. The culturalisation of heart is the way of recognising God. Vemana says:

“With such eyes can we view the Deity?  
The eyes that see him are different, the  
vision is diverse. Must we not look to him  
with an internal eye?”

The ‘inward vision’ is an indication of the dawning of divine light. Faith is the pupil of ‘internal eye’. Vemana says:

“Faith forms the tie *between him and the Deity*). It is a qualified state of being.  
This is the tenent ordained for *our belief*.”

This man has erred: he knows not the inscrutable.” Vemana says that there is an intimate relationship between God and man:

“If we love Him, He will love us; if we love not Him, never will He love us.”

Vemana wishes to bring home that the salvation of man is in his own hands. The way to godhood for man is to love God. Human culturalisation begins that very moment when man feels the love of God within himself. But human deterioration sets in when man only loves himself and forgets to love God. Such a man is bereft of hearkening his inner voice and remains a brute. Having lost himself in the maze of worldly

life, he forgets himself and God. God-absorption is the completion of humanisation. The worship of God is, in fact, human awareness and awakening. God is one. This is what Vemana believes:

“There is but one Lord of the universe who rules the world.”

Or,

“Neither in earth nor metal, wood or stone, painted walls, or images, does that Great Spirit reside so as to be perceived.”

Or,

“He whose form is universal, who is eternal, who himself witnesses all that passes in every heart, who exists immutably throughout the universe, and is free from all shadow of *darkness-this being* is called God.”

All religions lead to the same approaches to godhood. Vemana says:

“Kine are of divers colors, but all milk is alike; the species of flowers vary, yet all worship is one; systems of faith are different, but the deity is one,”

There is an unbridgeable gulf between the ‘*shirk*’ and the worship of God. The ‘*shirk*’ is animality,

while the worship of God is spirituality. Hence Vemana says:

“O! ye who, ignorant of the God who dwells in the heart, bow down to all stones, ye mere animals! What is there in a stone *superior* to what is in a living body.”

Here Vemana has brought about the difference between the non-spiritual aspect of idol-worship and the essence of the worship of true God. In the same manner, he shows the conflict of ideas between the worship of God and pilgrimage:

“Those who roam *to other lands in pilgrimage* to find the God that dwells within them are like a shepherd who searches in his flock for the sheep he has under his arm.”

Men are ignorant of the reality of God. The worshipper of God is a culturalised personality. The man who is a ‘worshipper’ of passions and calls himself a worshipper of God also, is far away from divine worship. Such a man has neither seen nor realised God. Vemana says:

“Why should the fool, who is still agitated by his lusts, seek after God? Forsake your passions and ye shall see him.”

Human doubts and suspicions can only be removed by divine worship as, by following this path, man attains the peace of heart. Vemana says:

“If, while on earth, he attain not the enjoyment of God, never shall the aspirant be freed from doubt.”

As human passions and doubts are hindrances in divine worship, so the study of man is an obstacle in the worship of God. Vemana says:

“After going through all his studies, and attaining consummate wisdom, after making nothing of divinity, *the moment* he sees a *fair woman* he forgets all his sanctity.”

Or,

“Excessive study leads only to disputatious talking: a man does not hereby attain divine knowledge: he is entangled therein like a skill-worm in its shell.”

Or,

“To what end is all this reading? What is the fruit of monkish life? Why perish entangled in the six *conflicting* creeds? Worship him, and know him who dwells in your heart.”

Or,

“It is not *to be found* by study; it is not the *royal* courts, neither in disputations nor in drawing distinctions in the divinity *accord-*

*ing to discordant creeds: ye cannot perceive the great obstacle, though in itself evident."*

Or,

"Let a man study astrology as much as he will, his fate is known to God alone."

Human intellect and understanding cannot comprehend God. Vemana says:

"The mind cannot see God so long as it is in this life; but convert thy body into a temple, and restrain thyself: give up all worldly thoughts and see him with thy internal eye."

At times, man's life is under the spell of fear. The feeling of fear is a psychological hindrance. Hundreds of people are incapacitated at his hands. The worship of God is the only panacea for curing fear in human heart.

Vemana says:

"So, all fear is ignorance: when fear leaves us, the divine spirit shall become our own, this body is perishable; proclaim, O Vemana, that the living soul *alone* shall be victorious."

In the eyes of Vemana, that man is free who lives in God alone. God is Truth. In a beautiful manner, Vemana describes such sentiments:

“The six flavours are diverse, but taste is one; Various are the creeds regarding truth, but truth is one: and saints differ among themselves, while he on whom they meditate is one.”

He who has known Truth has mastered himself. Vemana says:

“When thou hast learned the truth thou shalt no more grieve.”

Or,

“He who knows the truth knows the Divinity, and this will enable him to slay all his lusts.”

Truth is God and wisdom God. Vemana says:

“If thou be imbued with truth, thou shall attain wisdom; by gaining wisdom, thou shall attain the truth. He is the regenerate who possesseth wisdom and truth in an equal degree.”

Or,

“In no world is there a blessing greater than wisdom. None possesses wisdom but he who recognises *its value*. Knowledge is comparable to itself alone, wisdom (tatwa) is the chief good.”

Or,

“Verily the foolish wretches who are unable to comprehend the mental wisdom taught by Vemana shall perish like a hair when separated from the head, devoid of sustenance here and perfection hereinafter.”

Wisdom is no abstruse philosophy. It is embedded in the worship of God.

“By looking to Thee is wisdom perfected; by looking to ourselves we fall into delusion; when we know Thee we shall know ourselves.”

God has no shape and is formless. Vemana says:

“A rug, bells, anklets, bald pates and a dyed vest! these are insufficient for the worship of God who is a spirit.”

The worship of God dispels the fear of death from man. Vemana says:

“He grieves for death, crying, “He is dead! He is dead!” the folly of miserable men cannot be told: What, is the soul subject to the bonds of death?”

Or,

“Where are sons or wives; where are relations; where are friends or servants at the

time when we perish? none of them will approach us: this is their nature.”

The end of the world is bound to come. Vemana observes:

“This earth with its mountains and seas, shall in the final destruction be all consumed: then shall the gods and the prophets perish and how shall even the victorious survive?”









