Chapter XIII

Sri Krsna Caitanya and His Reform Movement —
directly revolted against orthodox systems of religious rites. Sri Krsna Caitanya was born in Navadwip in the year 1486. His grand father Upendra Misra was a wealthy man and a devout Vaisnav. One of the seven sons, of Upendra Misra Jagannath Misra, migrated from Srihatta (Sylhet, now in Bangladesh) to the bank of the holy river Ganga in Navadwip. Then a noted place of learning and a centre of Sanskrit learning. Caitanya's nick-name was Nemai, as his mother used called him by this name. The learned men of the locality gave the child the more glorious name of Visvavara and he came to be known as Gauranga in the later age of his spiritual career. It was by this title that his followers called him since he was man of fair complexion. His Vaisnavite name was turned to Srikrsna Caitanya after his renouncing the world at the age of 24. He was a boy of studious nature and he studied under the guidance of Gangadas Pandit. Soon he earned much reputation from the intellectual circle of Navadwip. His elder brother, left his worldliness and embraced a monastic life at age of 15. The parents of Sri Caitanya well hurt much at this. The father of Sri Caitanya finally departed this world. The disolate mother persuaded his soon son to marry. Sri Krsna Caitanya married twice at his mother's influence. His first wife was Lakshmi, a daughter of a

the emotional intensity of resurgent Vaisnavism, and in the poetry and song, social toleration and religious fervour, the exuberance of life continued unabated for the next hundred and fifty years. With this renaissance, the rules of the house of Hussain Shah are inseparably connected. It is almost impossible to conceive of the rise and progress of Vaisnavism or the development of bengal literature at this period without recalling to mind the tolerant and enlightened rule of the Muslim Lord of Gaur'.

*Hist. of Bengal
V.2. Muslim period
1200 - 1737, J. N. Sarker; ed
pp 143 - 144.

When Sri Krsna Caitanya was in a mood of preaching his religious ideals and was advancing towards Gaura.
The police-Superintendent ( Kotowai ) reported this matter to the king.

'Kotayai giya kahilek rajasthan'8

Sri Caitanya Bhagavat 3/4/24
The Superintendent of police reported this in such manner as he was a Hindu and apprehended the wrath of the kinghood. Such was his version:

Bahutuli nirankar bole Harinam
Bhojan Sayan ar nahi kichu kam,
Caturdig haite lok aise dekhite
Kaharo na hay Citta gharere jaite
Kata dekhiacchi ami sab sa jogi jnani
Emata adhbut kabhu nahi dekhi suni.

Sri Caitanya Bhagavat 3/4/42 -44

*He constantly repeats the name of Hari by stretching his hands upwards. Even he has given up his habits of dieting and sleep. People from all corners throng to him to have a vision of him. I have seen so many wise and yogi mendicants but never seen a man like him*.

Receiving the report from the Superintendent of police the king himself took an initiative and sent a Hindu spy Keshab Khan by name to investigate the whole matter to the preaching of Hinduism in a Muslim state and ecstatic condition of Sri Krsna Caitanya. As the
spy was a Hindu, he suppressed the facts and reported
to the king that the mendicant himself a vowed renouncer
and he had no other ambition, only he deserves a
shelter under the Canopy of a tree.

'Ke bale gosaine ek bhikshuk sannyasi' /
Deshantari garib briksher talavasi' //</s.
S. C. 3/4/54

which means, 'who told you that is a gossain?

He is a saint lives on alms and a poor
renegade, talks shelter under the canopy of a tree'.
Finally the aged king realised the essentiality of
spiritualism, and admitted the universal concept of
Godhood and shown patience to bear the religious
ideology and subsequently he gave up his orthodox views
on religion. Brindavandas Thakur thus stated the
wide-heartness of the Sultan.

Hindu Jere bole krşna
Khuday javane
Cai tinho tischaya janiha sarva jane.
'To whom a Hindu speaks krşna, you should know
all that Muslims speak him khuda'.

S.C.3. 3/4/54
The socio-religious condition of Bengal which was prevailing at that time supported in many ways to make Srikrsna Caitanya a real man, and religious reformer, 'Al Kamil / آل کامل / in the language of spiritualism of Islamic concept.

Influence of environment and Islamic influence on Srikrsna Caitanya.

Srikrsna Caitanya was a product of past thinkers, - Lord Buddha and Mahavir Jain, who fought against Vedic ritualism. After the constant efforts of the followers of Buddha. The religion of love was carried to the both the hemispheres. His religion had touch of humanism and rationality.

Kṛṣṇadasa Kaviṛāja's coinage in his Sri Caitanya Caritamtra apparently supports this truth.

Baulke kahio loke haila baul
Baulke kahio kale nanika aul.

In Indian system of prayer there was no place worshipping God with a restless mood like streching the hands up and with dancing feet and noddings of heads. But
there is dancing Dervesh in sufism, some dress of Caitanyavite sect has resemblance with the sufistic saints.

Spiritual idealism of Sri Krsna Caitanya's Life and motivation of missionary activity of Sri Caitanya was based on the Srimad Bhagavata. There is an utterance in the Srimad Bhagavata.

'Sarvabhutesu ya pasyet bhagavadbhavam atmanah /
Bhutani bhagavatyatmany esa bhagavattamah' //

He, who sees all the qualities of God in all living beings and never differently treat each other and he, who sees God in them, is a true follower of Him. Similar utterance is also available in the Srimad Bhagavat Gita, a universal sacred Book of all ages for all. Whatever it may be, this mystic saint of Bhakti yoga (an era for devotional Cult) solely imbided with the thought of humanism. He tried to develop his own ideas of humanly qualities in Caste ridden, so-called Brahmin dominating society, where there were four Varnasrama's (four sectarian division of Hindu Community) and there was place for other religious thinker to share the pragmatic and philosophical views of Hinduism.
In the fourth Chapter of Second Canto of Srimadbhagavata, there is a sonorous stanza in Sanskrit, which depicts the picture of an ancient society of India:

Kirata hunandhra pulinda pakkasa
Abhirasumbhra yavana khasadayah /
Yeanye Ca māpā yadapāsrayāsrayāḥ /
Suddhanti taṃmai prabhavisnave namaḥ //

(I like to) bow down to the influential almighty, to whom refusing Kirata, Huna, Pulinda, Pukkasa Avira, Sumbhra, yavana and Khasas get redemption from sins for their misdeeds.

In the time of writing Srimad Bhagavata, there were the existence of aboriginals of India origin also other claims from the western hemisphere including the Greeks. Srimad Bhagavata had shown much interest for the welfare of other heterodox clans. The universal appeal for humanism is present in this old scripture of India. SriKrsna Caitanya was a mystic devotee with a scholastic aptitude of interpreting the versions of the scriptures.
He had no higher ambition except the realisation of mystic Godhood. His psychological intention had revealed the truth in the nectar hymn dedicated to the god Jagannatha where he prayed:

Na bai Yace rajyam na kanakamanikya bibhavam /
Na Yace aham ramyam sakala janakanyam varavadhum //

'I do not want from you beautiful bride which is wanted by all, valuable jewels (i.e. money), pomp grandeur or Kingdom.' In another hymn dedicated to Lord Jagannatha he had composed a beautiful lyrical poetry and had uttered the following universal concept of manhood:

Naham bipro na ca marapatinrapi baisyo
    no sudro
Naham barni na ca grihapatirno banastho
    yatirba /
Kintu prodyannikhila paramanda purnamrta -
    bdhe

'I am not a Brahmin, not a kshatriya, nor Vaisya or Sudra, I am not even a Brahmaceri nor a householder, or even not retired from house-holder's life, not I
am practing austerity in the forest and not even renounced the world; but I am only the servant of a servant to the lotus feet of Sri Krishna, who is full of cestatic source of enjoyment, and an ocean of nectar, the protector of cowherd damsels.

He never denied the value of the worldly life and hated only the worldiness of the householders, those who wanted the social stratification based on various varnas and casteicism. He wanted to restore social unrest by denying the unwanted groupism in a society. Kaviraja Krsnadasahas really depicted his reformatory attitude in his work:

Ghrinabudhi kari jodi
Nijadharmajay
only I may turn into hater
if my religion dissolves/

His ideal of life was:

Trinadapi sunicena taroriva sahisnuna/
Amananiā manadena Kirtaniya sadā Hari//
'Treat yourself nothing but a straw increase your power of forebearance like a plant, you should show your respect even to the unworthy and constantly chant and repeat the name of God'.

So he was able to take in his fold the different castes of that time which was prevailed among the Hindu Community including a few of the different sect. Among his followers there were 39 Brahmins in numbers, 29 were the kayastha, 37 were Baiyias, Subarnabanik was 1 in number, one was Sutradhara by caste, Karmakar was one, Modhak was one, a title bearing Hajra without mentioning caste was one, other unknown castes included 95 heads. His sannyasins (saints from other sects) were 54. He had a Parsi disciple also, among his disciples one was Rajput, 26 others were taken from the different sub-castes of Orissa. The followers of him used to dine a congregational gathering at a time.

Calu kala mudgi dadhi akatra karia /
Jati nas' kari khāy akatra haiyā //
collecting the materials for cooking like rice, peas, card etc., they used to take their meals in a gathering by killing their sentiments for castehood,'
The followers of Sri Krishna Caitanya were initiated to switch over their food habits to vegetarian plates. Most of the Sahajias followed his principles faithfully as there was presence of Buddhistic influence in their daily life. For this introduction of vegetarian habits his Muslim followers were also not annoyed at this.

Sri Krishna Caitanya introduced the antromorphological concept of Godhood. He attributed all powers and good qualities to Lord Krishna and declared him as an incarnation of God. One cannot personally share this views, but one would admit one thing, that the concept of humanism was a vital inspiration of him, in the concept of religion, which he introduced in Bengal.

Thus Krsnadasa Kaviraj says:

Krsner jatsaka lilā, Sarvothama naralilā
Narabapu tāhār swarup /

'Among the part played by God, playing in the human form is the best of all. The body is nothing but manifestation of Him.'
He was a man of renounced personality. He introduced strict ethical and pragmatic rules: for not holding any movable property or food like medieval sufi saints like Baba Farid -din -din Sakkargonj, who passed away in emaciated condition, but never he used to hoard anything for the next day.

Yet he never showed any disrespect to social and personal duty of a householder. He repented for his own inability as he missed the chances of serving his living old mother.

\[ \text{Tu'c} \text{tr seva Chāri āmi kariāchi sannyas /} \]
\[ \text{Dharma nāhe kailā āmi nīja Sarvanasr} // \]

After renouncing the world he was debarred to serve (mother) her, it is not quality of religion, only I have done a mistake which turns hindrance to my spiritual progress. The movement, which Srikrṣṇa Caitanya lead was primarily a movement for elite group, but finally it turned into a 'mass flight to vaisnavism'.

Sipin Chandra Pall says:

' The general Vaishnava upheaval created a continental mass movement in India... The movement
of Sri Chaitanya helped also very largely to enunciate the so-called lower classes or castes of Bengali Hindus from the many social evils under which they had been living in the old Brahmanical society.... All these had tremendous influence in working the uplift of the Bengali masses. He also made impression to the two other mystic souls of Tukaram of Maharashtra and Mira Bai of North India. Tukaram was not historically contemporary with Sri Krishna Caitanya, but for the ideal of him he raised his common mystic life to a revolutionary life, and he tried to break the shackles of old religions customs, fought against the ritualism in favour of humanism. Mira Bai, another mystic, an ethical ministrrel of North Indian school of vaisnavism, had a blessing from the followers Sri Caitanya Vaisnavite sect, but because of her association with such neo-vaishnavite sect she was debarred from the range of 'Asthachap' poetess from the history of Medieval Hindu literature. She also denied the distinctions of castehood. She had an association with the weaker section of that time based on religious ground.

Swami Vivekananda, an apostle of a religious personality of the nineteenth century India, a harbinger of religious harmony, has really remarked about the
neo-vaishnavite movement of Bengal in the fifteenth century that Caitanyavite had changed the traditional path, movement from rigid and insipid tract of monistic advaita philosophy of India to the progressive path of humanism. Thus he says :

"....... out last movement, Caitanyavism, you remember was for enjoyment ".

"...... 'yes' Vaisnavism says, it is all right' this traditions love for mother, for brother, husband or child'. It is all right, if only you will think that Krishna is the child, and when you give him food, that you are feeling Krishna. This was the try of Caitanya, 'Worship God through the senses as against the vedantic cry, 'Control the senses' suppress the senses'.

This is an outcome or interaction of an Indian mystic of traditional thought of Bhakti Cult with the sufiistic sentiment of medieval Indian history, which render a great service to the downtrodden even to the rationalistic age of twentieth century.

3. Works: v. 6 (let)
K. S. Lal has remarked in his noted work *Twilight of the Sultanate* about Šrīkṛṣṇa Caitanya by attaching the evil of the day and in giving a simple religion of Bhakti to the people. Caitanya contributed much to the regeneration of the Bengali people.
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