CHAPTER XV

RAJIDASA: A TRUE DISCIPLE OF RAMANANDA
Ravidasa : A true disciple of Ramana 

In Srimad Bhagavata Gita Sri 

Caturvarnam maya sristam gunakarmavibhagasah /
Tasya kartaramapi mam vidhyakartaramavyam //

Canto. 4 - 13.

The simple meaning of the above verse is 'I have created four sections of the society based on the qualities of men and distributed them the selected works and duties, I being non-attaching attitude though responsibility goes me'.

The various interpreters all over the world explained the motivation of the meaning in a befitting manner in different direction to the interest of the people of a particular era. The meaning of the above said Sanskrit saying may be interpreted in the modern outlook of Marxism though. We can derive the following extracts from the universal utterance of Sri 

India prevailed in Indian soil from the time immemorial,
but it depended on the abilities of a man. The extracted meaning of the verse indicates that, ability of man depended also with the quality of an individual personality with his likeness and unlikeness (Quality - Sattva associates the purity and high calibre of a personality with his psychic plane, quality - Rajas - associated with the men of worldliness and who are involved with the terrestrial enjoyments quality - Tama associated the personalities of unclean mind and those avoid high thinking but for the lowly personal interest and like to live on their physical labours). The third historical meaning is coming out that caste system was not rooted with its rigidity in the society and it was a system of employment basis job analysis. But it is a historical truth that some unscrupulous persons with their cleverness exploited the situation for their interest of a particular community (varna) and exploited all other block-headed persons and induced system of casteism in Indian society with a wrong motivation.

Ramananda, a learned saint of the mediaeval India and disciple of Raghavananda of Varanasi, realised the matter of nothingness of casteism, even at the dawn of thirteenth century Raghavananda rusticated his one of his beloved disciple Ramananda from his monastery at the instigations of his orthodox disciples. His expulsion was
due to his pravrajya (pilgrimage), where he did not strictly maintained the disciple of the sri sect (Ramanuja's school) regarding his 'Mhara' (food taking). Ramananda's catholic heart embraced the saints of the high qualities (guna of high standard - Sattva) to preach his own mission to his countrymen. Ravidas or betterly known ana wrongly pronounced a name - Ruidas, particularly in Bengal. Nothing is known about his biography, but source elements are) lying with the hagiography, written by the disciple of a disciple of Krsnadasaji of the Himalayan land of Kulu. Agradasa was initiated by Krsnadasaji, that Krsnadasaji was a disciple of Ramananda. Agradasa continued to bear the catholicity propagated by Ramananda. His disciple was Nabhaji, he was devout soul but born in a lowly caste of Dom (deal with carcass or unauthorised dead body).

The preceptor of Nabhaji ordered him to compose the hagiography of the saints of the devotional schools. Though he was not a learned man, yet he devoted much of his efforts in composing the sweet lives of the saints. A saint of Madhva school, Priyadasa composed

1. Bharatya madhya yuga sadhaner dhara -
Kshitimohan Sen
C. U., 1930.
a commentary on the composition of Nabhaji to make it religious simultaneously historical documents. NeNabhaji's scripture on the biography of saints is called 'Bhaktamālā' (a garland of devotees) and an old specimen of Hindi literature.

According to the evidences given by NabhaNabhadasaji, Ravidāsa was born in a cobble family of Varanasi. Like Kabir, Ravidasa also used to live by mending shoes of the saintly men. Sometimes he used to make shoes. But he never used the shoe-making as his one gainful business. Ravidasa would spend all his time in absorbing in the name of Rāma, the hero of the Hindu Epic, the Ramayana. He would not complete the work and was frequently abused by his poor father and finally the father drove out his son from home in utter disgust. Without finding any other path of earning livelihood, he started again his shoe-making business. But he used to give them out to any barefooted monk of Fakir. He used to say one thing only: 'What shall I do with any other treasure?' 'I want only my beloved god whom none would be able to steal. The name of god, simply by uttering, generates power in mind. That bliss I can never get from anything else.'

2. Ibid. Reprinted in 1965
According to Lala Sita Ram and his esteemed friend Shyam Behari Misra, 4

His father was Raghu and his mother was Ghurbinia. He was directly initiated by Ramananda, while he was a child and slightly changed his name from Raidas to Ravidasa. The valuable composition of Ravidasa was included in the holy scriptures of the sikhs. In one of his sweetest couplet he said:

Tum makhtul suphed sajial ham vapure jas kira /  
Satsamgjati mil rahiai madhava jaise

madhupa mahira //

Jati Ochhi, Panti Ochha Ochha janamu hamara /  
Raja Ram ki sev na kini kahi Ravidas camara //

According to 'Bhaktamālā' Ravidasa said:

"held that the soul differs from god in that it is encumbered with a body. God is everything, is gracious to all evil passions and should be worshipped with all the devotion that man is capable of. Ravidasa selected virtue from vice, made choice of god acts and avoided things forbidden". 5.

5. Spirit of Indian Culture : Saints of India - Vivek Bhattacharyya N.D., 1960 p 199
The Saint Ravidasa also said: 'Ram Kahat sav jag bhulana so aha Ram na hoi'

'My Rāma is not Rāma (of the epic), whom all men regard (as son of Dasaratha) him' 'Rama' of Raviuasa was an eternal emblem of love and thus he said:

'Sav ghat antar ramāsi nirantara main dhekhan nāhin jana'.

'You (Almighty) are always present in everything. Only I have got a training for seeing you'.

His god is nearer to man :

He said: 'ja karan main dur phirto av ghatme pāi'.
'i searched him roaming here and there but I found him in (the form of living being) in my heart'.

His definition of god :

Vimal ekras upjai na vinsai asth tanha manhi /
Vigata bigata ghatai nānhi kavahun vasat vasai sav mahi //
"Such a purified nectar of one special type has no time of production, and it is an undestructable element. It was once existed and will continue to exist, unperishable such element is living in all the hearts of living being".

He worshipped the Almighty in all movable or immovable materials including the living beings.

He said: "Janha janha jau tumhari puja". 'In any corner of the earth, where I go I used to see Him that everywhere His worshipping is going on'.

He never separated himself from Him:

Jo tum girivara to hum mora /
Jo tum cand jo hum maye hain cakora //
Madhav tum na torhu to hum nahnin torhin /
Tum saun tori kaum saun jorhin //
Jo tum diana to hum vati /
Jo tum tirth to hum jati //
Sanci priti hum tum saun jori /
Tum saun jori aur sang toli //
Janha janha jau tanha teri sewa /
Tum saun thakur aur na dewa //
Tumhare bhajan katahi yamphansa /
Bhagti hat gabai Ravidasa //

From the Granth Sahib.

which means :

"If Thou art a Hill, then I am Thy peacock;
If Thou art the Moon, then I am Thy Chakor;
If I break with Thee, whom shall I join ?
If Thou art a lamp then I am Thy wick;
If Thou art a place of pilgrimage, then I am Thy pilgrim;
I have joined true love with Thee;
Joining Thee, I have broken with all others;
wherever I go there is Thy service;
There is no other Lord like Thee, O God,
By worshipping Theem Death's noose is cut away
Ravidas singeth to obtain Thy service".

(Tr. by V. Bhattacharyya).

Ravidasa : A symbol of dedicated life to the service of humanity :

Ravidasa was a true Vaisnava anu he served humanity with his untiring service. In the congregational
assembly of the saints, he, then used his personal capacity to serve them in a systematic manner. The younger community was his admirer, they served the saintly community with a befitting manner. Swami Vivekananda, a nineteenth monk of India adopted same manner which Ravidasa, a saint form lowly caste adopted system of dealing the younger generation before five hundred years ago to serve his countrymen in the time of need.

His historical influence on the cobblers all over India.

His permanent service to his countrymen was a unique. His fame and personal influence was so deep that the whole of the cobbler community adherent his name at their title. The most of currier class and tanner community dropped their unethical habits of life and adopted a concrete process of sane life. Though they are not socially and economically advanced yet they are not lagging behind in case of highest thinking. They are convinced with simple song sung by Ravidasa. They believe in the omnipotent god and they used worship Him in one universal form.
Ravidasa's influence was so deep that it is generally believed that he was the preceptor of Rajasthan Queen bard Mirabai. Even the orthodox Brahmins also recognised him a superior saint of the age. Nothing is known about his departure from the world. His final word to the nation was:

Kahi Ravidas jo japhi nam /
Tahi jati na janma na yoni kam //

'Ravidas says, he who utters the name of god, he has no caste, no birth (in a particular sect), or he belongs a particular sect'.

His universal utterance is nothing but an echo of the universal proclamation of -
Ramananda :

Jati pati punche nahin koi /
Hariko bhaje se hari ka hul //

'You should not asked any one of his caste or clan who thinks god, is himself a man of the Almighty'.

'He is the supreme gift of Ramananda's silent revolutions in social order'.
1. Bharatiya Nadya Yuge sadhanar dhara -
   Kshiti Mohan Sen,
   C.U. 1930. Reprinted 1965
   p 66

2. Ibid.

3. (The) spirit of Indian Culture : Saints of India -
   Vivek Bhattacharyya - New Delhi, 1980
   p 197

4. Selections from Hindi literature Book 4
   - Lala Sita Ram, C.U. 1924
   p 86

5. (The) spirit of Indian Culture : Saints of India -
   Vivek Bhattacharya - p 199.