Chapter IV

ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY OF SRI VEMANA
Vemana could see through his penetrating intelligence that wealth and its high and low levels caused more harm than anything else in society and man must always remember that the ubiquitous hand of wealth influenced every aspect of our life's struggle for existence. It can make and mar a man's life. Poverty is a wild fire that can destroy all values. So everybody must leave no stone unturned to make money by the sweat of his brow.

The Muslim nobles, the Persian money lenders, and Pathan speculators shared the surplus produce of the peasants along with the Hindu Deshamukhs, Deshpandes and merchant speculators. The peasants paid fifty per cent of the produce as land revenue. The upper cast land lords not only occupied the best lands but also privileged land holdings and rent free Inams and watans which enabled them to live in comfort.

The poligars, chotanawafs and other powerful fellows became bandits to loot the villagers. Violently exploiting the peasants and encroaching the lands of the poor. While condemning the systems which permitted the rich to exploit the poor and the community his personal philosophy was to exhort the rich to help the poor and attain salvation. His sympathies were always on the side of the poor. One should perform good deeds and he laid the greatest stress on helping the poor.
That unless a classless society was established through voluntary sharing of wealth. There would certainly be a violent revolution causing misery and destruction. He did his best to set things right by persuasion and his poetry became a most powerful means. He was a practical philosopher and a socialist who believed in an egalitarian society.

His statements were fearless and open. His ideas have to the thoughtful persons as the sun's rays to the lotus. He asked the rich to give relief to the starved whatever he might be. The starving must be fed. Whether they were good or bad, high caste or low caste, friends or foes even they chandalas (untouchables).

Vemana told about the dignity of labour. One must earn money with his own hard labour. He should not depend on others' money though it is his parents. The whole wealth in the universe belongs to God. Vemana is the first saint poet and philosopher who recognized the "Dignity of labour" in our Telugu field. Being a supporter of the poor to establish economical equality he asked the rich to give their daughters in marriage to the poor for such actions according to him would bring about more social justice and alleviation of poverty.

Vemana thought that such alliances between the rich and poor families would lead to better social justice and social harmony.
Vemana could see that it was impossible to persuade the rich people in society to be more charitable and helpful to the poor. He was disgusted with their greed and callous indifference to the sufferings of the poor neighbours. His solicitude for the welfare of the poor was so intense that he had no hesitation in asking his followers to rob the rich and help the poor by all means.

"By cheating or deceiving or through theft or by force any how you must secure wealth from the rich miser persons to help the wretched poor." 2

"Whether the wealth belongs to parents or relatives or others take the money form them compassionately to distribute it to the starving. It is a great virtue of humanity." 3 One can give his own money to the needy. It is not a great thing. One who gives others wealth without fear he is called real human being. 4

Vemana could understand the social reality and the origin of property and wealth more rationally than most of contemporary saints and poets of India. He could not only see the harmful effects of the great gulf between the rich and poor, and the consequent social disharmony, but also discern that neither land nor wealth was the eternal possession of their present owners.

Vemana says Man is temporary being on this earth. Everything is transient.
He says in his verse “When one says with pride that the land belongs to me the land laughs loudly. When a man says that this wealth belongs to me the wealth laughs.”

A coward fears in battle field the death laughs.

Land belonged to the village community. But it had passed into the hands of the upper caste group in course of time. The elite class not only prevented the lower depressed classes from acquiring and occupying land, but also encroached up on common land and expropriated the poor by virtue of their political coercive power and armed strength. Vemana as a social thinker could proclaim that wealth was the product of labour. It is by stating such self evident scientific truth in his verses, that he has excelled most of the poets, saints and philosophers of his time not only in Andhra but also in India.

In his “A Study of the History and Culture of the Andhra” Kambhampati Satyanarayana observes rightly, in an age when the gulf between the exploiter and the exploited did not yet rouse the masses to action the idea of abolishing the system of exploitation was inconceivable. He was the first known poet of the Andhras who could see not only the gulf between the rich and the poor but also discerned the process of transformation of caste into class though his conception of class was not the modern scientific one which was not possible for his time. Vemana advised the people who were
suffering in the famine circumstances should leave native places to go other distant places for their lively hood. He compared it to the cranes that go away when the lake is dried up. 5 Vemana thought man must be free from debts. He knows the social economical structure. He himself experienced and saw the others suffering.

One who is in debts will suffer mentally. When the mind is depressive the body will suffer. When the mind and body not in peaceful condition he cannot do anything successfully. It is too bad to have a friendship with a wicked person. In the course of time he will spoil you. It is not proper to do unwholesome work. It is nasty. The fourth moral Vemana says in this verse is the worst this is to mortgage to others. This verse is purely economical. Man must have self control 6 A selfish miser feels always as if the wealth always be with him that he will live for ever. When he leaves this world he does not take a single pie with him. Really he is ignorant. 7 A fool earns lot of money and keeps it in the earth secretly. He does not help anybody who approaches him. He does not enjoy it. His life is waste. His money also is useless.8

The man who earns wealth abundantly gets proudness and egotism. He thinks that the wealth is given by God to him as a remuneration for his good deeds in previous life. He also thinks that he is fortunate and feels superiority complex. He wants to enjoy the life luxuriously. He never thinks about his fellow beings
who are suffering from poverty and illness. He makes himself self-centred. With egocentric nature he falls in bad habits like debauchery, gambling and other evil practices. He spends his wealth in wrong ways. He looses his wisdom. At last his life will be ruined. Christ says "Pass it on Pass it on it is not for thyself only" "Love thy neighbors as thyself" (Bible)

The wise who does good deeds in this life will attain salvation. The fool who wastes his money in evil practices will decline.

Vemana emphasized it in his verse: The man who is wealthy does not give food to the hungry man at his door from a distant place. But he gives money harlots for temporary sexual enjoyment.

All social activities are linked with money. One who is good for nothing the society look down upon him. One who has self sufficiency will be respected. Society will give him financial help also. Through money man can attain contentment and happiness. He who lives with hard labour will get social sympathy. One who earns money in good ways his character and conduct will be praised. One who has good money dealings in the society and helping nature to the fellow beings in a humanitarian outlook he will be appreciated by all. Vemana Says in a natural way in this verse "In whatever method one must earn money for the livelihood of his family, whether it is by servitude or by hard labour he will be
respected by his wife. If he is unable to earn money looked down even by his wife also.

Money is the criterion for respect and dignity in this society. 10 One who he loses all his money becomes pauper; his mother, wife, children and near and dear would not like him, on the other hand they will become enemies. Through this verse Vemana says poverty is a handicap and most harmful.11

➤ The rich man attracts all.

➤ Though he is short seems tall.

➤ Though he is black seems red like rose.

➤ Though he is ugly seems most handsome.

➤ Though his words nasty they sound melodiously.

He is rich. Richness is power. Money is double edged sword. The rich man can do whatever he wants. The rich man can get whatever he needs in this society. Vemana told boldly, "A rich man will be praised as more handsome than cupid. More stronger than Bheema. He shines like sun. When he looses his wealth and become pauper the same society looks down him as a mad fellow."

12 Whenever a man amasses wealth he naturally becomes proud. He develops evil ego. The common people are looked down by him.

He is no way useful to the society. Generally, the poor people are attracted by him thinking that he will be helpful to them.
Vemana criticizes such a reserved rich man. He cannot open the mouth before others because he is not all interested to help. Vemana cynically compares him with that of the typhoid patient who is inactive.\textsuperscript{13} Some people give charities to show their greatness in the society. Some orthodox people give alms to remove their sins of past and present. Some others donate to exhibit their status. Some cheat the mob in the name of religion.

Vemana says that he who gives in a secret way without any secondary thought is the real donor. Such a man is blessed by God. The Bible says if you give the alms with the right hand that left hand should not notice it.\textsuperscript{14} One who earns a lot of money without helping nature to the needy fellow being, keeps wealth in the earth without enjoying life is wasted. He destroys his own life also as a fool.\textsuperscript{15} If there is a wicked person at a kind hearted man who desires to help the needy always comes on his way and stops. It is just liked a thorny bush under the Kalpataruvu (A tree in paradise which gives all boons) i.e. the deserved cannot reach the Kalpataruvu due to the thorny bushes.\textsuperscript{16} Birds and beasts never ask help mutually. When a man who is suffering from poverty asks financial help his close friend in the refused what can we say he is utterly useless and impotent. We can see the Vemana's righteous indignation in this verse.\textsuperscript{17}
One who helps needy secretly he is genius person. He is a real donor. Some body exhibits their pompus in their alms giving. Wealth is only the criterion but not the caste. He who achieves self sufficiency is superior to any caste. Wealth gives every thing. Even the superior caste man having no wealth is inferior to any caste we can see in this verse the Vemana’s economical view about this society. One should not borrow form the money lender. Borrowing is a nasty thing and it is dangerous also. When there is no other way one should borrow money from the lenders to come out of the difficulties. The money lender looks like a sun (Loka Bandhava) when he is giving money. Generally, the money lenders are all profit motivated. When the lender demands the money to repay he looks like Yama. If the borrower is unable to repay the money within the time he has to face insults and difficulties.

Vemana does not like borrowing. In Vemana’s view wealth is unstable. Man’s life is transient. Every body knows it. Yet he is in delusion.

When the man who got richer he becomes proud. He does not care any body. Wealth is like moon light. It increases and decreases. Wealth gives all the pleasures in this life on this earth. If you get wisdom through the wealth in this life you will enjoy pleasures in the Heaven.
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