

BHAGAWAN RAMANA

Bhagavan Ramana is one of the long line of saints and sages that have incarnated in the world to restore Dharma and fulfill the promise that the Supreme Being gave to posterity :

*Yadha yadha hi Dharmasya
glanir bavathi Bharata
abyukthanam a Dharmasya
Tathatmanam Srajamyaham.*

It is not realised that apart from Hinduism, no other religion has produced a succession of saints and sages to restore righteousness in the world. You may look at Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. There is no reincarnation of the Buddha, Jesus or the prophet.

On the other hand, Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhava have come into the world at different times to lead the people in the path of Dharma. When Hinduism was enveloped by dross of ritualism, Sankara incarnated to restore the pristine purity of Sanatana Dharma.

The Alwars and Nayanmars of the south, Purandara Dasa and Dyaneswar of the west, Mahapurusha Sankara Deva and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu of the east had taught the Bhakti marga and rekindled the spark of Divinity in Man.

In our own living memory, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Ramana and the Mahaswami of Kanchi appeared in human form to lead the erring humanity to the right path.

It is noteworthy that not one of them claimed divinity. They set an example as human beings to the rest of the humans by their austerity, impeccable rectitude and wisdom. The divine qualities displayed by Sri Rama will be nothing to admire about if Rama had put himself forward or treated as an incarnation of God. That is why Rama says:

*Atmanam manushamanye
Ramam Dasarathamajam*

“ I am a mortal Rama, son of Dasaratha.”

Ramana displayed such divine qualities when his mother died. During her last hours, Bhagawan did not eat and tried to comfort her but when she passed away, he did not show any sign of grief or distress. He felt that she had been liberated from human bondage. The Bhagawan who has realised that the soul is neither born nor dies, that it casts off the worn body and enters the new, demonstrated by his example what he had been teaching, namely that death is only a change of form.

When Bhagawan was once asked what he thought was the most important teaching of Bhagavat Gita, he replied, the verse

Aham atma Gudakesa
Sarva Bhutasya sthitaha

I am the Self, Oh Gudakesa, existent in all beings.

There are two concepts in this short line.

One that Atman is different from the body.

Second that the Atman is existent in all beings.

Bhagavan's through self-enquiry made one realize that the body was different from the Self and that there existed in every being the Atman. On one occasion, Bhagavan asked me if I had ever felt something telling me that what I was about to do was wrong. Even the worst criminal, the decoit, the Murderer and the sinful experiences it. But being impelled by his ignorance, he overrules the gentle remonstrance. If the 'I' is the body, what is it that remonstrates against evil?

To enable common folk to reach that Awareness, Bhagavan advised the seeker to ask the seminal question 'Who am I?' The realisation of the Self, the essence of Jnana, is at once brought to the common man from the high pedestal of the knowledge of the Sage. Every one, the uninitiated in Vedas, the unlettered in scriptures, can ask himself the question and find the Reality for himself. Unlike Sankara, Ramana did not write Bhashyas to the Vedas, Upanishads and the Dharma Sutra. Where was such a need when Bhagawan who is the incarnation of the Supreme Being, himself was the originator of all scriptures and the repository of Brahma Jnana. By his simple bodha (teaching), he placed the highest knowledge within the reach of the common man. He could explain to people of different intellectual levels from the sage to the layman in a language which each could understand and follow. Thanks to excellent efforts made by Ramana Ashram, his several talks have been preserved for posterity. There is a parallel in thought between Adi Sankara and Bhagawan. Of the several paths to Salvation – Moksha – the Anushtana (rituals), Bhakti, Jnana and Karmaphal Tyaga (discharge one's duty without expecting any return) mentioned in Bhagavat Gita, Sankara and Bhagawan gave primacy to Jnana Marg, the path of knowledge. In Bhaja Govindam, Snakara says

<i>Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moham</i>	Desire, Anger, Greed, Delusion
<i>Tyakthva</i>	– casting off
<i>Aathmanam Bhavaya ko Aham</i>	Make an enquiry within yourself
<i>Ko Aham_ Aathmanam Bhavaya</i>	“who am I?”.

The identification of oneself with the body is the cause of all ills of the society nationally and globally. Bhagwan said that “the thought I am the body has grown in man because people said you are fair, you are dark, you are tall, short, you have this name, form. The idea that you belong to _this religion, caste, state” has led to racial, religious, linguistic, territorial and economic conflicts in the world and it would persist so long as one does not realize that the Self in other beings is the same as his and refuses to see divinity in every other being.

Bhagawan used to say that there was no difference between Bhagawan and ourselves. Sankara said

Tvayi mayi cha anyatra yeko Vishnu
in you and me and elsewhere the same Vishnu is there.

Isopanishad says:

Yasthu Sarvani Bhutani
Aatman eva anupasyati
Sarva Bhuteshu cha Aatmanan

Thah to na vijugupsate.

He who sees all beings in his own Self
And his own Self in all beings
He does not hate anyone thereafter.

The same idea is put forward in the Gita.

*Yo mam pasyathi Sarvatra
Sarvam cha mayi pasyathi
Thasmaham na pranasyami
Sa cha me na pranasyathi*

He who sees me in everything
And sees everything in me
am not separated from him
Nor is he separated from me.

According to the Western Philosopher Spinoza, God is not a cause outside of things which passes over into things and works upon things from outside. He is immanent, dwelling within working from within penetrating and impregnating all things. He continues:

To its essence pertains existence so that there is no other essence or existence, it thus coincides exactly with essence of God.

Our Saiva Siddhanta saints have expressed the same idea beautifully. Saint Arunagirinathar sang

Show me that path to realize you (the God) are not apart from me and I (the devotee) am not apart from you.

Tayumanavar put it more picturesquely:

When I wanted to pluck a flower for offering to you, I hesitated, because you are already in that flower.

When I wanted clasp both my hands in prayer, I felt embarrassed as you are already embedded in my heart.

As when I offer prayer to you, only half is engaged in the process, is it proper for me to offer worship?

Ramana's greatness lies in the fact that he carried this wisdom to the common man in the language and idiom intelligible to him.

In one of his answers to searching questions which almost border on cross examination from Paul Brunton, Bhagawan said: "Ishwara is immanent in every person and every material object throughout the universe. The totality of all things and being constitute God".

Again, Bhagawan says

"Be still and know I am God.

Aham Braham Asmi

To sum up:

The Advita philosophy is scientific, logical and has universal appeal. It has captured the imagination of Western philosophers like Spinoza and Aldous Huxley. Sufism and Omar Khayyam freely deal with the ephemeral and transient nature of life on earth. In short, the Advita philosophy has stood the tests of time.

Among the bright stars in the firmament that explained and exposed the Advita philosophy, Bhagawan shines a diadem as he carried the complex concept to the masses in his own inimitable simple way. His message lives and will continue to do so as long as humanity lasts.