

जब तक जाति न जात्र



संपादक
डॉ. राजेश पासवान

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Analysing Ravidas and Browning's Spiritualism

Dr. Surender Singh

"The reflection of the Lord
is visible in the body of a saint
If you want to see the invisible Lord
See Him in the visible saints."¹

—Kabir

Visionaries and sages – great human beings of unbounded heart and compassion – enable us to see a world without divisions. Through them, we see the potential of human beings to know their common spiritual nature and live a life rooted in spiritual values that nurture all humanity. What is significant is that they teach a way of being that leads to the experience of the Divine, and that they themselves are living examples of a path of action that is a possibility for everyone. Hence, perfect saints and mystic, who really know the truth, always have the same message to convey, regardless of the place and time in which they live. Their message is simply to release sufferings humanity from the ever-rotting cycle of birth and death.

"Ravidas, the cobbler, glorified God.
By singing His praise every moment
He, though of a lowly caste, turned himself into an exalted one,
And all the four castes come to bow at his feet."²

—Guru Ramdas

Sant Guru Ravidas, came with the same mission as other saints, is one of the glittering enlightened souls of the Bhagti Movement which paved a spiritual way to common masses. He came from a low caste, rose to the pinnacle of spiritual glory and preached his message fearlessly to people all caste and creed. We have seen how Kabir held Guru Ravidas in very high esteem, he clearly says:

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1. Utkal, A. Isaac, Kabir, the Great Mystic, Punjab (Dera Baba Jaimal Singh): Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 2002, p. 60
 2. Upadhyaya, K.N., Guru Ravidas, the Philosopher Stone, Punjab (Dera Baba Jaimal Singh): Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 2009, p. 183.

"Among saints, Ravidas is the true saint."³

Many of Guru Ravidas' celebrated contemporaries now live only in the pages of history, but Sant Guru Ravidas with time has grown in stature as the most dynamic, inspiring and loved devotee and poet of his era.

"I have become immortal now- why should I die anymore?
The world of unreality and illusion I have discarded,
And the form of truth I have established in my mind.
Whatever is visible is all the snare of Maya; I have cut off all its ropes.
Many times have I taken birth and died; I shall not again fall into this whirlpool."⁴

Present paper is an attempt to analyse Guru Ravidas and Browning spiritualism in their creations. Robert Browning, who is reverently known as a 'spiritual seeker' and an 'incorrigible optimist' in the history of English Literature, lay emphasises on immortality of God and soul in his superb, scintillating and unforgettable poem 'Rabbi Ben Ezra'. Guru Ravidas reminds us of the fact that our birth is a rare privilege as a result of the meritorious deeds of innumerable lives. It is bestowed upon us primarily for the purpose of God-realization. As Mira, the true disciple of Guru Ravidas asserts:

"Human birth is a rare jewel, you have blessed;
It is a blessing, you may not get again."⁵

It provides the only opportunity to escape from the long, almost unending cycle of birth and death. The basic purpose of human life is therefore defeated if one remains lost in the quagmire of worldly delusion and fails to find the path of God-realization. Guru Ravidas says:

"That life in which one is caught in doubt and delusion
Is indeed to be called worthless.....
The One who pervades every beings, O Ravidas-
Why should you forget that Lord?"⁶

Since all people are offspring of the same God, therefore, they are equal by birth irrespective of all superficial distinction of caste, creed, cult, colour, country or religions. Their low or high standing therefore can only be determined by their noble or ignoble deeds and not by their birth in a particular caste, family, or religion. Both Guru Ravidas and Browning believe that all human beings proceed from the same Creator, and the same Creator pervades them all. Symbolically, they say, God is the

3. Ibid.: p. 183

4. Upadhyaya, K.N., *Guru Ravidas, the Philosopher Stone*, Punjab (Dera Baba Jaimal Singh): Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 2009, p. 35

5. Sethi, V.K.; *Mira, the Divine Lover*, Punjab (Dera Baba Jaimal Singh): Radha Soami Satsang Beas, p. 143

6. Upadhyaya, K.N., *Guru Ravidas, the Philosopher Stone*, Punjab (Dera Baba Jaimal Singh): Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 2009, p. 26

Potter (the Creator), and soul is the clay (human being). Guru Ravidas conveys this message explicitly:

"All earthen pots are made up of the same clay;
The same Creator has created them all.
The same One pervades all beings, O Ravidas;
The same Potter has made them all."⁷

God who is the goal of our life and object of our search is one and the same for the entire creation.

"How can you maintain the distinction of high and low?
When all have arisen from the same Divine Flame?"⁸
"From the same Brahma, O Ravidas, this entire expansion has come about.
All beings are made out of the same earthly elements and the Creator of all the same."⁹

Robert Browning also firmly believes in immortality of the soul. He says that human beings are closer to God. A human being, in essence, is a drop of the ocean of divinity. Man can discover the divine purpose and would lead his life in light of God's purpose. He describes the divine spark as:

"Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide?
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God.
Who gives, then of his tribes that take, I must believe."¹⁰

The world is like a dream, a delusion. A person deluded in this dream is oblivious of the fact that the human body that is loved and adored so much is in reality nothing but a cage created of five elements. The body is only a brittle assemblage of flesh, blood, bones and saliva. No sooner does the bird of the soul fly out of it than it is reduced to ashes. Under the spell of ignorance, one mistakes appearance for reality. Guru Ravidas and Browning express the same immortal truth in these lines par excellence:

"The wall is made of water, the pillar of air
And the plaster of blood and sperm; a framework of bones,
Flesh and veins makes the cage
In which dwells the poor bird, the soul.
O my mind, what is mine or yours here?
Like a bird perched in a tree for a night,
The soul dwells in the body, says Ravidas, the cobbler."¹¹

7. Ibid.: p. 176

8. Ibid.: p. 176

9. Ibid.: p. 177

10. Robert Browning's poem 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' (line 25-30)

11. Upadhyaya, K.N.; Guru Ravidas, the Philosopher Stone, Punjab (Dera Baba Jaimal Singh): Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 2009, p. 68

Browning also solely affirms in the enslavement of soul in the cage of body and she always yearns to liberate herself from this bondage. He asserts:

"...this flesh,
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled over to the earth, still yearns for rest."¹²

Browning says that Human beings must have full faith in God; they should trust in His dispensations and praises His magnanimity and love for all His creatures. Two eternal varieties of life are - God and Soul. God is the potter and soul is the clay. Earthly shadow will flit away, but God and soul will live forever. The human soul is the cup formed by God, the potter, this cup of the human soul will be placed on the festal board in the drawing hall of heaven and God will fill it with the new wine of heaven and taste the wine poured in the cup. God's lips will glow as the new wine from the human soul. He describes as:

"All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure."¹³

Guru Ravidas expresses the immortality of Almighty Lord and soul in these indelible lines:

"In performing your arti my mind is thrilled with delight,
And Thy form appears within me, intensely bright,
Thou are imperishable, immortal, steady and formless,
Being devoid of qualities, colour or sign.
Fully awakened are Thou - existence, consciousness and bliss intensified,
Immutable, infinitely lustrous and unmodified.
Thou are unparalleled, unborn, omniscient and infinite,
Undifferentiated, imperceptible, ever-abiding and self-activated."¹⁴

In the concluding lines of the poem, "Rabbi Ben Ezra", Browning expresses completely devotion and dedication in the feet of God who is the True Creator and the Great Master of the universe. He prays to God to accept his soul for his service. It is possible that some defects and blotches might have crept into his soul during his earthly sojourn, though originally the soul was planned in perfect way by God. The stress and strain of the world might have given some twist to the soul of a man, and might have made it less perfect. He asserts as:

12. Robert Browning poem 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' lines: 61-63

13. Ibid lines: 157-162

14. Upadhyaya, K.N.; Guru Ravidas, the Philosopher Stone, Punjab (Dera Baba Jaimal Singh); Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 2009, p. 92

"My times be in thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
... and death complete the same!"¹⁵

In the last line of the above cited stanza, Browning hopes that after death his soul would be purified and perfected. It means that what is left incomplete or undone in life; death will accomplish and complete the rest. But, Guru Ravidas categorically rejects it and says that why should one wait for death. He firmly believes in human life alone, one can not only purify and perfect the soul but attain God-realization and salvation also which is the ultimate reality and goal of our life. By the process "dying while living" one can purify and perfect one's soul and attain the otherwise inaccessible God. This process is the akin to the process of death, except that it is voluntary and blissful in spite of natural death. He says that this world is a cycle of ever-rotating birth and death. Life after life, we return to this world to reap the fruit of our past action and to sow the seeds of the life to come. Thus, the endless cycle of action and reactions goes on.

Guru Ravidas makes it clear that all outer searches are useless because God is within us. He says that he can be found only by means of internal spiritual practice and that all external observances and rituals as well as the outer display of religiosity are futile. Searching for the Lord inside, worshipping Him within and the way to the inner treasure clearly point to the withdrawal of the soul current from the nine portals of the body to the eye centre. The eye centre is a point between and behind the eyebrows from which the soul's spiritual journey begins. The following excerpts from the Adi Granth are of relevance:

"Close the nine doors and collect your scattered mind in the tenth,
Which leads you to your true home?
There rings the unstruck melody day and night,
Which you can hear with the help of, a mystic adept."¹⁶

Saints have described this inner eye as the 'third eye', 'the single eye', 'the door of the home', 'the third mole', 'the divine eye' (divya chskshu) and 'the tenth door' (daswan dwar). Guru Ravidas, describes it as "the door of the Lord".

When the soul withdraws from the body and enters inside the third eye, it takes first step into the inner regions, which Guru Ravidas describes as the "Inner Sky", where one can perform the real worship of the Lord and start merging the self or soul into the sound current.

When the soul (Surat) merges into the Sound (Shabd)
And becomes one with it

15. Robert Browning poem 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' lines:190-192

16. Upadhyaya, K.N.; Guru Ravidas, the Philosopher Stone, Punjab (Dera Baba Jaimal Singh): Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 2009, p. 41

Then one obtains supreme bliss.
The lamp burns inside, O Ravidas.
And divine bliss arises within."¹⁷

"The lamp burns luminously without wick or oil.
Making the Surat one-pointed within.
Behold the game of the Lord, O Ravidas."¹⁸

By devotion to Nam alone, true love for God is generated and one succeeds in attaining divine union. The practice of devotion to Nam is the only means of manifestation, the unmanifested God. As Guru Ravidas points out:

"God's name alone is my support.
It alone is my life, my vital breath and my wealth."¹⁹

The process of withdrawing the soul current from within the body to the eye centre through concentration has been called "dying while living" in the Adi-Granth. This process is the akin to the process of death, except that it is voluntary and blissful in contrast to ordinary death, which is involuntary and painful. The following excerpts from the Adi Granth are of relevance:

"Nine doors have the body, but tenth give salvation,
Through the tenth door one hears the unstruck melody."²⁰

The full realization of this true or unlettered Nam is the keynote of Guru Ravidas teachings. Nam, being essentially one with God, is said to be the only truth that was in the beginning and that will continue to be the end. It is the source of all knowledge and bliss. It is the creative power of the Lord that manifests itself in the dual aspect of light (Nirat) and sound (Surat). The manifestation of light and sound within marks the actual beginning of the soul's inner journey to the Lord. Thus drawn by the inner sound or melody, the soul rises successfully to higher and higher regions and finally merges back into its source, the Supreme Lord. Thus, in human life alone one can see, realize, meet & attain God- which is otherwise inaccessible. Guru Ravidas describes this state in the following word:

"I drink, indeed the nectar of God's love
Drinking this nectar, 'Me' and the world are forgotten,
And I get intoxicated with the divine elixir.
Every moment, cup after cup of love is served,
And the intoxication leaves me not."²¹

17. Upadhyaya, K.N., *Guru Ravidas, the Philosopher Stone*, Punjab (Dera Baba Jarnail Singh) Radha Soami Satguru Beas, 2009, p. 47

18. *Ibid.*, p. 47

19. *Ibid.*, p. 37

20. Upadhyaya, K.N., *Guru Ravidas, the Philosopher Stone*, Punjab (Dera Baba Jarnail Singh) Radha Soami Satguru Beas, 2009, p. 47

21. *Ibid.*, p. 57

Guru Ravidas searched for God within his own body and found him there, and he asks us to pursue the same path to the Lord.

CONCLUSION

Human birth is a rare privilege and priceless gift given by the Lord to attain Him. The world is, indeed like a dream, a delusion. A person deluded in this dream is oblivious of the fact that the human body that is loved and adored so much is in reality nothing but a cage created of five elements. The body is only a brittle assemblage of flesh, blood, bones and saliva. No sooner does the bird of the soul fly out of it than it is reduced to ashes. Under the spell of ignorance, one mistakes appearance for reality. Both Guru Ravidas and Browning believe in the same immortal truth.

Browning hopes that after death his soul would be purified and perfected. It means that what is left incomplete or undone in life; death will accomplish and complete the rest. But, Guru Ravidas categorically rejects it and says that why one should wait for death. He firmly believes in human life alone, one can not only purify and perfect the soul but attain God-realization and salvation also which is the ultimate reality and goal of our life. By the process "dying while living" one can purify and perfect one's soul and attain the otherwise inaccessible God. In the cultural and spiritual life of the country, Guru Ravi Das has remained illuminating and inspirational through the last five centuries, a shining star with an ever-increasing brilliance.

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