

New Vaisnavism and Sri Sri Harichand Thakur

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Abstract – The New Vaisnavism has given emphasis on practical life. One of the main objectives of New Vaisnavism is the combination of the mundane with that of spiritual one. The mundane will be based on righteousness and on which the spirituality will stand. It has opted to establish a casteless society based on equality and fraternity. So, Sri Sri Harichand Thakur a forerunner of New Vaisnavism has discarded the caste system of Hinduism with a paramount voice. The main objective of New Vaisnavism is to uplift the downtrodden and with the same time all-round development of all the people.

Mahaprabhu had promised to his mother that He would take birth further as her son. Such an evidence could be found in the "Chaitanya Bhagavat" written by Bridabandas under the heading "Sannyas granartha Gouranger Masthak mundan" in the sixth chapter, "Aro dui janma ei sankittanrambhe/ Haiba tomar putra ami abilambe//". It is said that Mahaprabhu had taken birth at Kheturi as Narattamadas. So, another birth was due. And in the same book He further declared that He would descend to uphold Dharma. "Brahman kuler garba kharba karibare/ Nichjati hoye karba dharmer prachar//" (I shall descend in the lower caste to ward off the boast of the Brahmins.) Mahaprabhu wanted to give everyone the right to chant Harinam irrespective of caste, creed, and religion and of gender. This idea more or less was successful for a time being but the evil of caste system of Hindu Social order engulfed it. It could be found among His devotees in most cases where the Brahmins occupied in the decision making process. Accordingly the reflection of Brahminical idea could be found in the "Chaitanya Charitamrita" by Krishnadas Kabiraj and other books produced after that. The true spirit of the thoughts of Mahaprabhu was hardly found in these writings.

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Mahaprabhu never gave importance to Casteism and He embraced all irrespective of caste and religion. But now the practice of Casteism is seen in the Vaisnavism. It is being preached that Mahaprabhu never ate at non-Brahmin families in His lifetime. Mahaprabhu preached a simple Nam bhakti marga among the people. There was no complicated tattva in His message. But His followers made it more complicated. This is supported by the writing of Debasis Pathak in his book entitled 'Sri Chaitanyer Antardhyn Rahashya' at page no 141, published by Deep Prakashani, 2016. "Mahaprabhu was not bound to preach the complicated theories of Vaisnavism. Nimai became Sannyasin for the sake of people. So, Nimai was a social Sannyasin in our country. He never stayed in the hill and forest leaving the locality. It was not possible for him to think world and people as illusion. His intention was to form a spiritual fold with the people by driven out the Casteism in religious matters and by surpassing the scriptures and sectarian motives in it. And in the latter period the theocratic Vaisnavas spoiled the path of simple Prema Bhakti given by Mahaprabhu to the people irrespective of caste and creed with their narrow theology and philosophy. And it was evident that Baldev

Vidyabhushan did not allow the Sudras to read the Vedas in his Brahma Sutra "Gobindabhashya".

The Vaisnavism preached by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was characterised by the equality among its followers and devotees. There was no high and low classification among them. It is preached with paramount voice 'Chandalopi Dvijo shresta'. The so-called caste system of Hindu society was ousted completely from the Vaisnavism of Mahaprabhu. Here a so-called Sudras had many Brahmins disciples. Such an instance can be found in 'Chaitanya Charitamrita' written by Krishnadas Kabiraj that Narottamadas had Brahmins disciples. After the death of Haridas an untouchable Muslim by caste at Puri all the devotees of Mahaprabhu were present there including the Brahmins ones drunk the padadakoh of Haridas. Even at the beginning of the Vaisnava movement at Santipur Advita Gosain offered the pinda of his mother surpassing all the Brahmins of those areas because He thought that Haridas was superior to Brahmins known to Him. Mahaprabhu would embrace all His devotees including those of the Sudra. This generosity of Chaitanyanite Vaisnavism attracted all people especially those that were

regarded as Sudras and untouchables to join this new fold.

In the Vaisnavism of Mahaprabhu it is now preaching verbally and through scriptures the practice of Nam aparadh. But Mahaprabhu did not approve Nam aparadh and advised to chant Harinam in all situations and its evident could be found in the "Chaitanya Bhagavat". Mahaprabhu also advised to shun up trifles of religious rituals. This has its proof in the "Chaitanya Bhagavad" in the heading "Mahaprabhur Bangadesh bhraman. Where it speaks" Suna Mishra, Kaliyuge nahi tapa yajna/ Jei jan bhaje Krsna tar maha bhagya// Ataeb griha tumi Krsna bhaja giye/Kutinati parihari ekanta haita//"(Listen Mishra, there is no tapayagna in the Kaliyug. He is the great lucky one who worships Krsna. Therefore, go home & worship Krsna with undivided attention giving up trifles rituals.)

In this way we can find that the teaching of Mahaprabhu was distorted and became more complicated. The tasks of "Patituddhar" and to preach "Harinam" among the general masses were not possible. Most of the Patit remained outside the movement. So, to fulfill His desire and to keep His promise Mahaprabhu descended on Earth as Purna Avatar at Safalanagar by the name as Harichand Thakur. Here in the biography of Harichand Thakur "Sri Sri Harileelamrita" written by Tarak Chandra Sarkar can hear the resound of Mahaprabhu in the Adi khanda under the caption " Sri Sri Hari Thakurerjanma bibaran", " Nich hoye kariba je Nicher uddhar// Ati niche na namile kisher Avatar //"

The nineteenth century's history of India as well as of Bengal was remarkable in many aspects. The Hindu society was marred with enumerable trifles and reached its worst ever level. The Hindu society was fragmented in the line of its age old caste system in uncountable numbers. There was no solidarity among the different sections of population. Social status of the low caste untouchables was indescribable. The caste Hindus was oppressing them in a number of ways. They had no social economic and political rights. They were treated like beast. Such a inhuman condition they were to live. They were really being termed as downtrodden.

In the nineteenth century there was the British rule in India. And before the British the Muslims ruled the country more than eight hundred years. During these time period the Hindus' culture and merit ruined. And they were engaged in trifles and petty matters. Unlike the Muslims the British brought with them some modern elements. And during the British rule in India the sign of awakening was felt among the masses. In Such a situation Sri Sri Harichand Thakur was born in 1812 in Bengal at Orakandi village in the district of Faridpur.

Harichand Thakur was the founder of the New Vaisnavism which is popularly known the Matua dharma. He was born in the year 1818 AD at Orakandi in the district of Faridpur of undivided Bengal. His father's name was Jashamanta Bairagi a devout vainava. Jashamanta Bairagi had five sons of which Harichand Thakur was the 2nd. As a boy Harichand Thakur was different from other boys as stated in the biography of him title 'Sri Sri Harileelamrita' written by Tarak Chandra Sarkar. And He had the quality of leadership. From his early childhood Harichand had the power of spirituality as stated in the above said biography. Revealing of spiritual power beginning to show in Harichand Thakur from his early childhood. He had also the power of healing disease by touching and pronouncing words. We can find in the 'Sri Sri Hatileelamrita' the instance of bring back dead man and cow to life by Harichand Thakur. People were rushing to him hearing the divine power.

In the nineteenth century there was such a socio-economic condition of people especially the village folks were unbearable. This condition was much graver in the case of the downtrodden. Harichand Thakur was deeply moved by the sight of this plight of people. As it is declared now and then in the biography of Harichand Thakur title 'Sri Sri Harileelamrita' written by Tarak Chandra Sarkar that he is the saviour of the downtrodden the patitpabana Hari. Harichand Thakur proclaimed a religion called 'Matua Dharma' as it has been termed as ' New Vaisnavism' to uplift the downtrodden in all respects so that everyone can be a good person possessing all qualities. Harichand Thakur diagnosed the disease of those people and the disease was ignorance. So, He prescribed to educate them first and side by side advised them to accumulate wealth to meet up daily necessary needs. Education would open their vision and lead to consciousness.

The New Vaisnavism emphasizes on the combination of paramarthic/ material world and spiritual world. And such a thing can be found in its religion that has been preached. Because all most all the sect of Hindu religions ignore the material aspects and emphasize on spiritual aspects only. Lives would not be balanced if the two don't come to each other. Spirituality would be established on rigid foundation of material world. As in New Vaisnavism is viewed that this world has come from God and God has created it. So, it cannot be illusion or false. So, to make this material world more beautiful and purify the body and mind the New Vaisnavism designs rules and regulations to be followed in daily life.

'Garhastha prasastha Dharma jibe siksha dite/ Dinanatha Hari abatirna abanite/' To teach all about the broad family life the Lord descends on earth. Everyone lives in family and it is the centre around which everything is revolving. Sanyashis and

Sramanas who have renounced the world depend on families for arms. The founder of the New Vaisnavism wanted to regularise the family life to make the society a happy one, so that peace exists. He discoursed monkhood and declared that a man can reap the fruit of monkhood leading a family life. Two lines can be found in support of his in the 'Sri Sri Harileelamrita'. 'Karibe grihadharma laye nija nari/ grihe theke nyash ibanaprasthi brahmachari/' Do the family life with wife and from there the like of nyashi, banaprasthi and brahmachari can be observed. To glorify about household life and to lay importance in it, it is said, 'Grihete thakiya jar bhaboday hay/ Sei se Param sadhu janibe nishtay/' If one's mind turn to God living in home definitely he is a great hermit.' And to practise love and devotion living in family - is the highest path. Not only that it is further declared regarding household life that is the cherished path and blocked the sentimental path.

Again in another pad in the 'Sri Sri Harileelamrita' which states that if one maintains family life properly and speaks the truth, then it is superior to banaprastha and paramhansa. It has given much emphasis in New Vaisnavism on truthfulness and controlling on sense organs. It has been described in such a way on truthfulness that nothing is equal to it; even all the pilgrims on earth cannot be equal to truth. And those who has controlled his passion is equal to meet him all pilgrims. We can see in the above mentioned scripture of New Vaisnavism about the uplift of all human beings: 'Griha dharma griha karma karibe safal/ Hate kam mukhe Nam bhakti-i prabal/Para nari matritulya mithyanahi kabe/ Para dukhe dukhi sada satcharitra rabe/ Adikshita na karibe thirtha parjyatan/Mukti ispriha sunya nai Sadhan bhajan/ Ei bhave kariben jiber uddhar/' One should perform the rules of family life and do all the house hold works successfully and chant the name of God while working with devotion. Always consider other women like own mother and don't tell a lie. Be compassionate to others' sorrows and maintain a pure character. Don't tour to pilgrims and keep without initiation. Be remained without the hope of salvation and need not any worship- in these way He uplift all human beings.

To preach his message he began to organise people. Harichand Thakur used to go village to village to propagate his message and teaching among general masses and in this way a large number of followers gathered around him. Among them he had twelve devotees who were called Pagal. These twelve Pagal took initiative to spread his message among a vast population. Harichand Thakur is considered by his followers as the Purna Brahman who is 'ajar amar Kshirod Ishwar'.

The causes of his coming down on earth has been narrated in his biography title 'Sri Sri Harileelamrita' written by Tarak Chandra Sarkar as stated below: 1.

To uplift the downtrodden in all aspects. 2. To annihilate the caste system. 3. To establish the Garhasthya Dharma and Garharthya Ashram. 4. To uphold the people who are perfect and pure in the centre of all. 5. To rectify the trifles of Vaisnava. 6. To rectify the devotees of Krsna. 7. To make a bridge between mundane and spirituality.

"Thakur balen more je diyeche man/Tor mane dosh karya karena kakhan/" (Thakur said that those who have given their mind to me; my mind does not commit any unrighteousness deeds.) Again he said, "Thakur kahen bancha dharma karma sar/ Sarba dharma hate shresta para upakar/" (the essence of religion is to serve others). And in another place Harichand Thakur said, "Sadhu seavinna bhabe bhalo karya nai/" (There is no cherish work besides to give services to saints.) In one occasion Harichand Thakur told one of His devotees named Dasarath who pursued the path of austerity to attain God but couldn't do it in that way. "Jatadin nahi ghuche chitta andhakar/ Tatadin chouchachar dubadubi sar// Snan bala kare sudhu uparete dhoya/ Atma suddhi na hale ki jay tare paoya/" "So long the darkness of mind do not go away, till then the process of bodily cleanliness and continuous bathing goes on. What bathing is called only to wash body only. And no one can attain God without cleansing of self."

In the New Vaisnavism there is no difference between Hari, his name and with his devotees. In the 'Sri Sri Harileelamrita' we can find lines in support of it. "Jeibhakta sei Hari bhaja nistha kari/ Namer sahit ache apni Sri Hari/". The New Vaisnavism of Harichand Thakur emphasizes the path of spontaneous bhakti and Prema. It is the highest path according to bhakti marga. The writer of 'Sri Sri Harileelamrita' Tarak Chandra Sarkar wrote: "Ragatmika ragdharma Orakandigan/ Er pare nahi kona sadhan bhajan/".

There is no place of outward showmanship in New Vaisnavism and such attitude has been strictly prohibited. It is not needed to hold a scanty loin-cloth worn for chanting Harinam. And it has given more importance on truthfulness and controlling of sense-organs. The flowing lines quoted below from the 'Sri Sri Harileelamrita': "Satyabadi Jitendra hoibek jei/ Na thakuk kriya karma Haritulya sei/".

The New Vaisnavism has given emphasis on purity of body and mind. Everyone should keep it always pure in all circumstances. In the 'Sri Sri Harileelamrita': "Deha man sarbakhn rakhite pabitra/ Sikhaite habe jibe sei mul sutra/" (To keep the body and mind always pure, all are to teach these prime formulas.)

One of the most important conclusions of the New Vaisnavism is that it has accepted equally the invention of a scientist and that of meditation of a

Rishi. Scientists and Saints (Rishi) are equally the same. In the "Sri Sri Harileelamrita": " Purbe jata Muni Rishi kariten dhyan/ Ebe sei dhyna hay jnanete bijnan/"The New Vaisnavism sanctions Garhastha dharma as the most important doctrine. And on the other hand it has discouraged the sannyas. They do not care for any kind of salvation except devotion to God.

Harichand Thakur descended on the Earth to establish eternal Sukshma Dharma to save the mankind as well as all the living beings. Everyone and every living being have the equal rights in this world to live in with dignity and without disturbance. But if we give an eye in the world order, we can find that the world is not going on in the right direction. Injustice and unrighteousness prevails everywhere making this world a place of hell. The world has come to the corner of degradation. Though the science and technology has progressed to a higher level; nevertheless peace and happiness doesn't exist. The moral decadence of most of the people comes down to a lower level. The animal and other living beings of his Earth are in a miserable condition. So, to make this Earth a better place to live in and to establish righteousness Harichand Thakur prescribes morality to follow for everyone.

1. One wife and one husband have been sanctioned as Brahmachari.
2. Build a family life with husband and wife and it will serve the purpose of pursuing the path of Nyashi, Banaprasthi and Sannyashi.
3. Consider other's wife and husband as mother and father respectively.
4. Be sympathetic to other's sorrows and deem it as if of your one.
5. Always maintain a good character.
6. You needn't be initiated by any Guru and needn't to tour to any pilgrimage.
7. Be devoid of Salvation and so need not do any kind of religious worship.
8. Do work with hands and chant the holy name of God.
9. Always speak the truth; nothing is equal to truthfulness.
10. Control the sense- organs.
11. To show kindred ship to Holy person is the centre of all virtues.

12. To take pity to all living beings.
13. In all circumstances trust in human

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