

RABINDRANATH ON ANIMAL KILLING

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Abstract: Rabindranath Tagore believed in eco-ethical human living. He was always against the institutionalized religion's practice of animal killing (sacrifice). The present paper tries to focus on animal killing throughout the history of religion from its inception to modern institutionalized form. Here the author has given focus upon Tagore's views on universalism of life and oneness of all lives. This paper also tries to portray the present day relevance of Tagore's views upon animal killing as a solution to the present day decline of society and the environment. The embracement of Tagore's views upon animal killing will bring sustainable development of our society.

Keyword: Rabindranath; institutionalized religion; animal killing; universalism of life; sustainable development.

DISCUSSIONS

Killing is one of the most viable effects of violence. Violence is the cause of any kind of killing. In this paper I have tried to focus the violence of animal killing.

Usually we are very much worried about human killing. But we don't worry that much about animal killing. We are eager to know in the daily newspaper regarding the murder and death of human being. We are normally not interested in the death and killing of other animals. Human being is above all species. Men are most intelligent among all living beings. We are not analyzing about why a person kills another person. We are discussing about the reasons why men kill animals.

In primitive society, when men could not distinguish between right and wrong, that time human being used to eat green leaves, fruits, raw flesh for living. But in modern society, people, despite being well aware about ethics, are killing animals. Primitive religion was pluralistic in the sense that these religions had faith in many gods. Further development of religion gave birth to monotheistic religion. That advanced oneness of god is the ultimate sanctioning authority of human activity. What is good or what is bad depends upon that commandment of God. So, to sacrifice animals before God was sanctioned by religious authority. This practice continued for a long time. It was Gautama Buddha and others who revolted against this practice.

This ritual practice wounded the heart of the poet Rabindranath Tagore and through his important drama "Bisarjan" expresses his grievance. That drama was written in 1890 in Bengali and later on it was translated in English as 'sacrifice' in 1917 during 1st world war. While laying emphasis on the slaughter of animals in Hindu ritual worship and on Jaysingha's self immolation, it also draws attention to the brutal sacrifice of human life demanded by Goddess of war. In the drama 'Sacrifice', Tagore developed two characters- Raghupati and Joysingha. The principle tussle had grown between the king Gobinda and the priest Raghupati. The king is the bearer of humanity and Raghupati is follower of conventional religious practice. Joysingha is between these two persons. on one hand he is duty bound to

Raghupati and on other hand his devotion to humanity symbolized in Gobindamanikya which has been more intense in the love of Aparna. Joysingha had to self-sacrifice to synchronise the two opposite attribute- Humanity and Duty. Raghupati was defeated to Gobindomanikya through this self-sacrifice. The activity of priest of Raghupati is built no traditional practice of sacrifice of animals. The King Govindamanikya hurt on that practice. A little goat, which was beloved by begger Aparna, was introduced before the Goddess for sacrifice. For that, Aparna raised allegation to the King. The tear of Aparna revived an unique light of realization and truth in the heart of the King. The King, through his self-introspection, realized that the conventional rituals are full of violence and brutalism. There is no place of human pity and kindness in these practices. So, ultimately, from the sense of true humanity, the King prohibited sacrifice of animals.

Rabindranath too may be quoted here referring his drama "Bisarjan" where killing has been condemned with organised religion against religion of humanity. Organised religion cannot act as the principle of unification. The religion of humanity advocated by Rabindarnath Tagore. Not only India, but the whole world needs today this religion more than anything else.

According to Rabindranath, religion or 'Dharma' stands for the basic nature of a thing, e.g. the basic nature or 'dharma' of water is to flow downwards, ther basic nature or 'dharma' of air is to go upwards. Similarly human beings also have a basic nature that is humanity. Religion in the truest sense helps us realize our highest nature by removing the artificially created conflict which stands in the way of realizing our humanity. When these barriers or conflicts are removed, my limited self gets expanded, becomes unlimited by beings united with all. The principal theory of human unity is that humanity of past, present and future converges towards a universal humanity. Again, despite the existence of differences between various countries, various nations and communities, humanity is above all differences. The aim of life is to expand the feeling of self in the global domain.

But question is how much we have utilized in our practical life from the theory of Tagore? In the modern capitalistic society, globalization, commercialization, liberalization and privatization are the main attributes which in turn eclipse our sense of humanity. We are thinking only about economic development and to fulfil that purpose we are in the competition of killing human being and animals. But this is a universal truth that every living being is very important for maintaining the ecology and natural balance. Rabindranath suggested the mingling of all lives to keep the system in balance. If it is not abided by, the environmental degradation will occur and ultimately the whole ecological system will break down. So, here lies the necessity and relevance of religion discovered by Tagore which needs to be applied and adopted in modern society in a sustainable manner.

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