

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SWAMI AGAMANANDA

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Ethics are the rules of personal behavior accepted by society. It is a system or set of moral principles. It embodies the rules of conduct governing a particular class of human action or particular group, culture etc. Ethics, sometime known as moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. Philosophical ethics investigates, the best way for human to live, and the kinds of actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances. But we can see the ethical degradation not only in India, but everywhere in the world. What is ethics? How we follow it? And what is the role of ethics in human life? We are quite ignorant in all these subjects. Vedas, Itihasas, Puranas and all other sacred books give us the clear picture about Dharma and Dharmanuṣṭhāna. But we don't take efforts to read or understand them. Like these sacred books, the preaching and teachings of our ethical leaders also are very relevant. Their advices lead us to an ethical life.

Kerala, the Gods own country is very much blessed with so many ethical teachers and social reformers. Kerala enriched through their non-stopping activities and enlightened through their mind-blowing words. Sree Naryana Guru, Chattampi Swamikal, Brahmananda Siva yogi, Swami Agamananda etc are the main social reformers and ethical advisers of Kerala. Among them Swami

Āgmanānda's contribution is very predominant and worthwhile. Swami Āgamanānda was a great social reformer, ethical instructor and a leader of spiritual renaissance in Kerala. He raised his voice against illiteracy, untouchability, caste-system etc. His voice was for moral values and ethical activities. He took great effort to extend Sanskrit education among ordinary people, which would give them right way to the knowledge of Vedānta. He was a good follower of Swāmi Vivekānanda. So he gave more importance to preach practical Vedānta and ethical values. He was a noted preacher of Vedānta and sanātana dharma, and was equally noted for the practice of its doctrine. A Vedāntin, who meditates and discriminates in a forest or a cave may be an ideal Vedāntin in many respects, but if he is a master of all learning, a powerful speaker an energetic traveler, he will be much more useful for a society that is eager to hear the doctrines of ethical philosophy from competent persons, who are learned in that philosophy and also live according to its doctrines. Swāmi Āgamānanda was such a person and a vital figure in the dynamic rational ambience of Kerala in twentieth century. The veeravani (valuable words) of Swami Āgamānanda are enriching and thought-provoking. For leading an ethical life, the teachings of Swāmi Āgamānanda is ever inspiring and empowering.

A Brief Life Sketch

Āgamānanda was born on 27th August 1896. His father was Narayanru Parameswararu of Puthumana Matham at Panmana. And his mother was Lakshmi Devi Antherjanam of Vatassery Matham at Chavara. His early name was Krishnan. At the age of five, he started his education from Krishnan Nampoothiri of Koipalli Illam, who was a scholar in many sastras. Then he started to learn Sanskrit traditionally under Sri. N. Raman Warriar of Vechur and Sri.N. Velu Pillai of Evoor. He continued his education in the schools at Kottamkulangara, Kollam and Mavelikkara. He took his M.A in Sanskrit from Presidency College, Madras, where Mahamahopadhyaya Kuppu Swāmy Śāstri was the professor of Sanskrit. After completing his studies he decided to give more concentration in spiritual preaching and practice.

He received 'Sannyasadeeksha' from Swāmi Nirmalānanda on 1928. After that he was known as Swāmi Āgamānanda. By the direction of the Swāmi Nirmalānanda, he established an Asrama at Puthukkad. Then he started his pilgrimage to Kashi, Rishikesh etc. He met and got the blessings of Swāmi Śivānanda, Swāmi Abhedānanda, Swāmi Akhandānanda and Swāmi Vijñānanda, who were the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa at Belur Math.

Even though he was a scholar in Mimāmsa, Nyāya, Jyothisha and other Śāstras, he gave more importance in Advaita Vedānta of Sri Śankara. As a follower of Sri Śankara, he was a famous preacher of Advaita Vedānta, and as a follower of Swāmi Vivekānanda, he was a renowned performer of it.

Social Activities

Swāmi Āgamānanda was deeply worried that the people of Kerala doesn't honor Sri Śankara. They cannot do anything for Sankara. As a devotee of Sri Śankara and good follower of him, Swamiji decided to return Kerala and selected Kalady, the birth place of Sri Śankara, for his social and spiritual activities. His sincere activities helped to create a positive atmosphere there, and he established a permanent religious centre at Kalady. With the help of devotees of Kalady, he started Advaita Āśrama on 1936. Later, the headquarters of Ramakrishna Math at Belur, affiliated this Āśrama as one of its centre in 1941. Then it came to be known as Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Āśrama. Swāmiji delivered ethical and spiritual lectures in educational institutions, in temples and in the religious conferences. The people of Kerala were inspired by the magnifying lectures of Swāmiji. Swamiji's lectures deal with a variety of subjects like the importance of Sanskrit study, the ideals of education, the need for religious instructions in schools, the practice of devotion, the importance of Sri Śankara's doctrines and his works, the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swāmi Vivekānanda and the subjects relating to all sides of Indian culture. All these subjects were based on moral values.

He worked hard for uplifting the down-trodden people irrespective

of caste, creed and colour. For the welfare of Harijans, he started a tribal hostel at Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Āśrama, Kalady. He took courage to teach Vedic hymns to non-Brāhmins. Always he reminded our ethical duties. Thus he started social reformation in Kerala.

Ethical Perspective

Swāmi Āgamānada was well versed in Vedas , Puraṇas, Ithihasas etc. So he used so many quotations from all these texts in his lectures. Swāmiji points out that, from the very ancient age Indians are using the word Dharma in the place of religion. Veda Vyasa says: - 'Dharmadarthaśca Kāmaśca kimardham Na Sevathe'. It means that Artha and Kāma are originated from Dharma. If we want Artha and Kāma we have to live in Dharma. There is no existence for Artha and Kāma without Dharma. For attaining Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa we have to live in Dharma. The basis of Dharma is Veda. Smrithi says: - 'Vedokhilo Dharmamoolam'. The basic principles of Dharma are based on Veda. The step for Bhakti is also Dharma.

Dharma is picturised as a bullock in Puraṇas. We can see 'Vande Dharamavriṣham Vriṣadhvajaradham' in Skandapurāṇa.

The four legs of that bullock are tapas, truth (Satyam), sympathy (Daya), and cleanness (Śaucam). Here Āgamānanda says- Tapas means the victory over sense organs and mind. The second is truth. We should be truthful in mind, words and in actions. The third is sympathy. We should be sympathetic to all creatures. The fourth is cleanness. We should be clean mentally and physically.

What we get following Dharma? Swāmi Āgamānanda says- Religion is realization. Character is the test of realization. Education is character making. Dharma or character is realization. Education, Dharma and character-building are inter-related. God is personification of Dharma-Dharmasvarūpa. Where is Dharma, there will be success and prosperity.

According to Swāmi Āgamānanda, without truth no society exists, no organization exists. We get everything by following Dharma. All that we get without Dharma will be momentary. No existence for them. But

what we get through Dharma that will last forever. To put in nutshell, we can say that the basis of education should be Dharma.

If we go through world history, Egyptian civilization Babilonian civilizations all are ruined. Why? Italian, Japanese, German civilizations were failure. Why? Not lack of weapons and treasure, not lack of education and universities, not lack of intellectuals and leaderships. Then why? Swāmi Āgamānanda points out the reason for the failure of all these civilizations are lack of Dharma. See the importance of Dharma. Without Dharma civilization cannot exist. One and the only way for ethical culture is to provide moral and ideal education to society, especially to young generation.

In Indian cultural tradition, lady is worshipped. The one and only country in the world where ladies are worshiped and respected, is India. In Vedas, Smritis and Purāṇas we can see the importance of ladies and in all these, ladies are respected and worshiped. Smrithi says- 'Yathra Nariyasthu poojayane Ramante Tatra devataha'.

Where lady is worshiped there prosperity develops. In Yaga and Yajña lady has a predominant role and seat is given at the right side. Ladies are the light of the nation. Dharma exists in purity and chastity of ladies. If Dharma ruins, India will ruin. Lord Sri Rramakrishna Paramahansa respected and worshiped Śārada Devi his life partner as Goddess. Swami Āgamānanda emphatically declares that only ladies can save India from evil forces. To save India from evils, all the ladies of the nation should come forward.

Conclusion

Swāmi Āgamānanda tried to bring forth and establish the teachings of Sri Śankaracharya, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swāmi Vivekānanda etc. His ideas, ethical views and his efforts influenced and inspired on a large number of people. He spoke against the evils and blemishes that surrounded in the society. And always he spoke about ethical duties of society. He highlighted the significance of Dharma in our day to day life.

Everyone has to do ones own Dharma. Dharma is a way of life. Father, mother, brother, sister, Guru all have to do their Dharma in life. Swāmi Āgamānanda points out that, the main reason for violence, calamities and all the blemishes, existing in the society, is the lack of Dharma. So we should lead a moral and ethical life.

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