



Short Communication

R.W. Emerson's differences with other Religions except Hinduism and the impact of the Bhagavad Gita on him

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Abstract

My own research on "the impact of the Bhagavad Gita on R.W. Emerson", shows beyond doubt that Emerson was heavily influenced by Hinduism. From his essay 'Transcendentalist' we come to know that he discerned Vedic truths due to his 'intuition' just like Vedic Saints. His agreement with other religions was only to the extent that they contained Vedic (Sanatan) ideas, otherwise he differed from them. R. W. Emerson considered himself a Brahmin. We see in his essay 'Self Reliance' Pg.33 that R.W. Emerson believes in 'devotion to deity with personality' and in his essay 'Illusions' that R.W. Emerson believes in Vedic deities 'Yognidra' and 'Mother of the World' like Vedic Saints.

Keyword: R.W. Emerson's, religions, Hinduism, impact, bhagavad gita.

Introduction

My own research on R.W. Emerson and Hinduism shows beyond doubt that R.W. Emerson was heavily influenced by Hinduism. I have shown this in my research paper, "The impact of the Bhagavad Gita on R.W. Emerson". In fact he discerned Vedic truths due to his 'intuition' just like Vedic Saints. This can be seen in his essay 'Transcendentalist'. His agreement with other religions was only to the extent that they contained Sanatan (Vedic) ideas, otherwise he differed from them. Here it is necessary to quote R.W. Emerson from his Journal. He stated on Vedic thought "It is sublime as night and a breathless ocean. It contains every religious sentiment, all the grand ethics which visit in turn each noble poetic mind.... It is of no use to put away the book: if I trust myself in the woods or in a boat upon the pond. Nature makes a Brahmin of me presently: eternal compensation, unfathomable power, unbroken silence... This is her creed, peace, she saith to me, and purity and absolute abandonment- these panaceas expiate all sin and bring you to the beatitude of the Eight Gods".¹ Here we see R.W. Emerson considered himself a Brahmin. He was made so by Nature herself. Brahmin is understood in the Bhagavad Gita as knower of Brahman. This is as per the Bhagavad Gita Chapter 18 Shloka 42. I have shown in my paper that R.W. Emerson was a Brahmin due to his views in his essays 'Self Reliance' and 'Circles'.

R.W. Emerson's 'devotion to deity with personality'

We see in his 'Self Reliance' Pg.33 that R.W. Emerson believes in 'devotion to deity with personality'. We see there and in his essay 'Circles' this is the concept of Bhakti covered in Bhagavad Gita Chapter 12. We see in his essay 'Illusions' that R.W. Emerson believes in Vedic deities 'Yognidra' and

'Mother of the World' like Vedic Saints. In his essay 'Compensation' Pg.56 I have shown that R.W. Emerson considers the morality of all things to be as per the Vedic Law of Karm. Further in 'Compensation' Pg. 58 R.W. Emerson states "A plain confession of the in-working of the All and of its moral aim. The Indian mythology ends in the same ethic" hence the morality of all is as per Vedic Dharm. Hence as per R.W. Emerson the aspects of other religions which do not agree with the Vedic Dharm are to be discarded. This is the exact same view of Swami Vivekananda. As per Swami Vivekananda "So far as the Bible and scriptures of other Nations agree with the Vedas, they are perfectly good, but when they do not, they are no more to be accepted. So with, the Koran"²

"Everything is bounded by that book (Vedas) - nothing (can go) beyond that, because the knowledge of God- you cannot go beyond that, that is Indian Orthodoxy"²

"You cannot bring another book that is as old as the Vedas. Everything else; it was all copied after that"²

"The idea is that the Vedas were never written; the idea is, they never came into existence. I was told once by a Christian missionary that their scriptures have a historical character and therefore are true, to which I replied, "Mine have no historical character and therefore they are true; yours being historical, they were evidently made by some man the other day. Yours are man-made and mine are not; their non-historicity is in their favour". Such is the relation of the Vedas with all the other scriptures at the present day"². This is similar to R.W. Emerson's above quoted view of Indian scriptures as "eternal compensation". This is also similar to R.W. Emerson's view

on 'Eternity' and 'Eternal love' seen in his essays 'History', 'Circles', 'Compensation'. This is also as per R.W. Emerson's concept of the 'eternal ONE' and 'everlasting nature' seen in 'Over Soul' Pg.139 and 151 respectively.

The different paths prescribed by the Hinduism are the concepts of individualism and independence of R. W. Emerson

Moreover Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism and other religions prescribe only one path for all. Hinduism prescribes different paths as per time, situation and the inherent nature of the person also his family, societal and national duties. This is the concept of Swadharm and Jati Dharm present in R.W. Emerson's concepts of 'genius', 'own work' and 'own thought' that I have explained in the paper. This is in consonance of R.W. Emerson's concepts of individualism and independence covered elsewhere. Hence R.W. Emerson differs with other religions on this aspect and their respective stand points have to be discarded in order to follow correct Vedic view.

"Confucianism considers the highest person to be an able minister of the king and country. It does not involve belief in the super natural or in a personal God"³. Personal God has been so succinctly and exhaustively expressed by Emerson, in 'Self Reliance', 'Circles' and 'Over Soul' so obviously therein lies the schism between R.W. Emerson and Confucianism. R.W. Emerson nowhere in his myriad and vast writings mentions or acknowledges any influence of Confucianism.

Conclusion

I conclude that R.W. Emerson held Vedic thought to "contain every religious sentiment, all the grand ethics which visit in turn every noble mind". Since in other religions there may be things opposed to the Vedic ideas, which as per R.W. Emerson will thus be against 'religious sentiment' and 'nature' so they will have to be discarded at some stage on reaching nature and religious sentiments or they have to die out. This concept of R.W. Emerson is supported by the Bhagavad Gita which considers everything contrary to Dharm to be Adharm or ignorance as per BG 13.12. Hence R.W. Emerson differs from the other religions on those aspects.

Reference

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