



## VEMANA'S VIEWS OF RELIGION

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**KEYWORDS****INTRODUCTION**

Kumaragiri Vema Reddy popularly known as Vemana was a 14<sup>th</sup> Century Telugu poet. His poems were written in the popular vernacular of Telugu, and are known for their use of simple language and native idioms. His poems discuss the subjects of Yoga, Philosophy and Religion and morality. He is popularly called Yogi Vemana in recognition of his success in the path of Yoga.

There is no consensus among scholars about the period in which Vemana lived. C.P. Brown, known for his research on Vemana, estimates the year of birth to be the year 1352 based on some of his verses. Vemana was the third and youngest son of Kumaragiri Vema, then the king of Kondaveedu in present-day Andhra Pradesh. He was named Vemareddy after his father.

Vemana came into contact with Lambika siva yogi in Kondaveedu, who initiated him into the path of Yoga. After his, Vemana traveled across the state, composing poetry and attaining success in yoga. Vemana composed numerous poems in the vernacular of Telugu. His poems are four lines in length. The fourth line is, in majority of the cases, the chorus Viswadahirama Vinura Vema - he thus conveyed his message with three small lines written in a simple vernacular. He traveled widely across south India, acquiring popularity as a poet and Yogi. People really took to Vemana's poems owing to their simple language and sweet message. So high was the regard for Vemana that a popular Telugu saying goes "Vemana" s word is the word of the Vedas. He is celebrated for his style of Chaatu Padyam a poem with a hidden meaning.

C.P. Brown translated most of Vemana's poems into English, during the British occupation of India. A large selection of his poems are a part of the present High school curriculum of Telugu in Andhra Pradesh. His poems are of many kinds, social, moral, satirical and mystic nature. Most of them are in Ataveladi (dancing lady) meter. Vemana was believed to have lived for some time in the Gandikota area of Kadapa.

Vemana is a popular Telugu poet. Even pothana, the author of Bhagavatha is not as popular as vemana. There is hardly our Andhra who does not quote atleast two or three verses of Vemana. His popularity is mostly confined to Andhra Pradesh. But his verses have been translated into other languages namely kannada, Tamil, and English" He may or may not have been the first Telugu poet who was translated into so many languages. Thus if popularity is the test of the greatness of a poet, vemana is undoubtedly a great Telugu poet.

Vemana is popularly known as a poet a great yogi, and a teacher of morals. Though the scholars on Vemana did not take points to go deep into the verses and identify whatever philosophy there is in his verses. They felt that vemana has a

philosophy and expressed their opinions. For instance - charless Philips Brown, who did Yeomah service to vemana by collecting the verses from various part of Andhra Observes Vemana was evidently in philosophy of the Vedanta School, a disciple of vyasa, not being a student of Hindu Philosophy. Brown could not determine vemana's school of philosophy, in Vedanta.

Major R.M MacDonald considers vemana more as a philosopher than a poet. But he wavers in his opinion on the philosophy of vemana. In one place he observes that the creed of vemana is pantheism for he identifies nature or universe with God. In another place he says that the terms Maya, Thatvam and Yogi frequently occur in connection with his creed.

Vemana expresses the identify of "Atman and Brahman in Symbolic language when he says that the whole world exists in the self which is like the atom it is quite likely that vemana uses the word anuvu to indicate the smallest invisible particle, symbolically speaking, the smallest possible particular or the universe is the magnified manifestation of the various forms of such a particle. Similarly the essence of all reality namely Brahman is immanent in the self which exists enshrouded by the body and mind.

According to some Indian philosophers like Nyaya, Vaisesikas the soul is atomic in size, just as the word is traceable to the self. These two must be one and the some since experience is impossible without reality and its existence has no meaning unless it is experienceable. It can also mean another thing. Reality can be understood either as infinitesimal or as the infinite. One should concentrate on the nature of Brahman as both infinitesimal and infinite so as to know its full nature.

Amongst the poets of his own country, Vemana is akin in his thought to Tiruvalluvar of Tamilnad, Kabir of the Hindi area, and Sarvajna of Karnataka. Dr. G.U.Pope praises Tiruvalluvar as "the bard of universal man." Vemana too is such a bard. In point of time, they were apart by fifteen hundred years and more; they had lived in different regions; in all probability they professed different faiths; they wrote in different languages; but their message is the same- the oneness of man. "In birth," says Tiruvalluvar, "all men are equal." If they differ later, it is not be-cause of their religion or caste, but because "they differ in character." "Though high in birth," he goes on to say, "if men lack high qualities, they are base; though low in birth, if they follow high ideals, they are great" Vemana too, as we have already seen, expresses the same truths much more emphatically. His conception of the oneness of man is indeed so grand, so magnificent, so all-inclusive, that he urges-

Serve food to all,  
All the people of the world

In one plate;  
 Make them dine together  
 Forgetting all their differences  
 And with uplifted hand  
 Bless them to live like one.

Like Kabir, Vemana is emphatic in stressing the oneness of God. "He is Allah, and also Ram," says Kabir. "Allah is perfect in everything, and He is God," says Vemana. To him, Siva and Allah are one. The oneness of God implies the oneness of religion and the oneness of life, and like Kabir, Vemana too lays particular stress on these truths. Vemana was a believer in one God and worshipped him under the name Siva.

"Pasula Vanne, Veru, Paaleka Varnamau Pushpajati Veru Pujayokati Darsanamuluvuru divambu okkati Viswadabhirama Vinuravema"

"Bodies are different," says Vemana, "but the life that animates them is one. Foods are different but hunger is one. Though cows are of different colours, their milk is white. Though pieces of jewellery are of different shapes, the gold with which they are made is one. Languages are different, but thought is one. Races and religions are different but birth is one. Flowers are different, but worship is one. Philosophies are different but divinity is one." Vemana's concept of unity is indeed so wide that it embraces all sentient beings, and even the inanimate. In this paper, I would like to make an indepth analyses of Vemana's views on Religion.

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