



SRILAPRABHUPADA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH OTHER PROMINENT SOCIAL REFORMERS

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Introduction

SrilaPrabhupada versus GandhiJi regarding untouchability

The word "untouchables" is most frequently linked with the treatment of the Brahmin upper class to minority populations in India. Among the masses these minority populations were the poorest and most ignorant. Gandhiji had profound sympathy for these unfortunately afflicted communities and, in his own eyes and in the eyes of others, Gandhiji thought of raising them as "Harijan" or someone associated with Lord Hari. But all Gandhiji's and the countless pro-harijan programmes by all post-independence administrations have sadly failed either to improve their living conditions or to improve their status. However, this cause of social justice nearly usually involves fulfilling an ulterior purpose of appealing to vox populi, not establishing dharma or eternal employment of the eternal living.

The ISKCON movement founder and acarya, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, has effectively elevated hundreds of thousands of unhappy souls all over the world on the platform of Krishna consciousness. He offered the world a deep spiritual knowledge of the term equality. He preached that one must realise that the self is not the outward body, but the soul within, and that at death the self-transfers to another body according on how he has experienced his life. This understanding is the beginning of the solution to the Harijan problem in India. Srila Prabhupada has offered spiritual solution for this problem quoting from vedic scriptures as described here under. As Lord Krishna explains in Bhagavad-gita, "The four divisions of human society were established by Me according to the forms of material nature and labour allotted to them" (Bg. 4.13). Thus, a given man's propensity towards a specific sort of labour is determined purely by the modes of materiality he has acquired, not by political, social or economic constraints. Krishna never cites birth as a concern, even though certain selfishly motivated people have exploited this birth argument to defend their bogus status above the so-called lesser births. This misunderstanding has unmistakably created hate to the caste system or the varnasrama system, and cry for abolition has come from all sides. Actually, everyone is born a sudra in this age (kalau sudra sambhavah). Only through proper education can someone reach the position of a brahmana. As we have previously seen, a brahmana is known, not by his birth, by his qualification.

Bonafide Social Reformer - SrilaPrabhupada versus Periyar EV Ramaswamy

Periyar was a politician and an Indian social activist commonly known as the 'Dravidian Kazhagam Father.' He established the Self-Respect Movement and the Dravidar Kazhagam to spread his views for social justice. Disgusted by the then widespread unfairness of the caste, he grew atheistic and rebellious against Brahminic domination, seeing the rule of others as high wrong.

Periyar was a strong atheist, who claimed Hinduism and Vedic writings as an area of misconceptions. He vehemently opposed of God and criticised Brahminic domination very much. He felt religion was accompanied by superstition and fear and impeded not just development, but also repressed the human being. "Religion is accountable for the exploitation of the undermined classes

Periyar argued that the evils of misogyny and casteism in the Hindu gods, he called for their abolition. He said " It is said that God created untouchability. If that is true, the first thing to do would be to abolish such a God.

Periyar has been vigorous in supporting women's rightful social position on equal rights and freedoms throughout their lives. Periyar opposed the Hindu shastras and Manu Dharma because they aimed to make women and lower castes respectively slaves of males and Brahmines, and they did not follow these words to realise the goal of equality in society. He promoted women's self-respect, independence and equality in society.

Periyaremphasised and advocated equality superficially amongst all human classes. He concentrated on social, cultural and gender disparities, as well as on faith, gender and tradition problems, in his reform programme. "God has been the primary cause of social disparities," he declared. In order to build a brotherhood society, he criticised Brahminism and Scriptures for the difference in society.

SrilaPrabhupada is the founding acharya of the Krishna Consciousness International Society. He has founded more than 100 temples and writes more than 80 volumes of authentic Vedic literature, leading millions of followers along the road of self-fulfillment. Prabhupada stated that Krishna awareness is separate from "religion" as a whole. Taking Krishna awareness activities is not the same as changing from religion to religion.

When everybody knows this unsectarian, scientific understanding of religion, the struggle between members of different religions will stop. Srila Prabhupada has written hundreds of publications on this topic to enlighten mankind. These publications are accessible to anybody throughout the world ready to get beyond transient religious labels and reach everlasting, universal truths.

The delicate reason necessary to study truth cannot be found in reasoning; it can only be found with the assistance of pure faith flowing from an godly heart and surrendering to the Lord; because divine grace alone can be achieved by divine faculties. It is irrational to imagine that the development of the arts and crafts, and the advancement of scientific discoveries and innovations have enhanced our material well-being. Death is sure to come and with it the annihilation of every worldly happiness and success as part of a dream-life. No amount of technical and scientific knowledge can help us to combat the horrendous torments of dying. The objective of human existence is to master this technique and to gain the expertise that can enable us to transcend the terrible ocean of nescience and achieve eternal freedom from the pinching bindings of sins, sorrow and uncertainty, sickness and death.

Varnasrama- The once predominant Indian caste system was a distorted interpretation of the ensegnements of Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita: "The four divisions of human society were formed by Me according to the three kinds of material nature and labour attributed to them. Though I am the system's creator, you should realise that I am still the undoer, unchangeable." (Gita's Bhagavad 4.13.) Krishna developed four divisions of human society, and everywhere, not only in India, they are present in every civilization. The four divisions of the society in Gita are then described by Krishna as being brahmanas (intellectual, priestly) ksatriyas (martial classes, kings, leaders, military men), vaisvyas (productive class, mostly farmers who produce and distribute food and businessmen) and Sudras (the worker class who have no ability to support themselves independently like the other three classes so they need to serve the other three higher classes for their livelihood). In every culture, these four divisions of men exist.

Woman is praised in the Hindu texts as the most powerful and empowering force. Old Hindu writings show a regard for the feminine. Women are referenced and participated in the Upanishad intellectual dialogues, as well as Vedic academics, instructors and priestesses. Manusmriti also respects and protects the rights of women. Manusmriti, for example, states in Verse 3,55-3,56 that "women should be glorified and glorified;" and "the gods delight when women are glorified; but where they are not, none of the holy rites bring out fruit." As stated by Will Durant in the book, Story of Civilization, a US historian: "In the Vedic time women had far greater independence than later India. Srila Prabhupada's pure teachings tell us that the first step in self-realization is to realise one's individuality separately from the body. "I am not this body but the spirit soul" is an important awareness in anyone who wishes to go beyond death and into the spiritual realm beyond.

"Male" and "female" are the names we attach to distinct sorts of bodies in this planet. Everyone is equal spiritually; the physiological and mental distinctions we perceive here have nothing to do with the soul. Everyone has equal opportunities for spiritual progress. We're not so spiritually progressed when we unduly connect ourselves with our transitory body (thinking, "I'm a Woman!" or "I'm a Man!").

The noble teachings of SrilaPrabhupada guide one to actual equality understanding and practise. Such equality focuses on all aspects of society, culture and gender. As Krishna states in the Gita: "The enlightened person sees an apprenticed scholar, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater with equal perception."

Social Reformer of Casteism and Untouchability-SrilaPrabhupada versus Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was an Indian lawyer, economist, political figure and social reformer that inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement and battled against untouchable societal injustice.

Ambedkar discussed the need of social changes aimed at abolishing the notion of caste discrimination and untouchability in India. He stated, "Untouchability was the flag of Hindu civilization, and its presence was opposed to Ancient India's fundamental humanism concept of tolerance."

Ambedkar denounced the classical Hindu scripture, the Manusmriti (Laws of Manu), in public during a lecture in late 1927 for being conceptually supporting caste inequality and "untouchability," and burnt copies of the ancient text ceremonially. He led hundreds of followers to burn copies of Manusmriti on 25 December 1927. He said: "If we want a united and integrated contemporary India, the sovereignty of all religions in Scripture must come to an end."

Dr Ambedkar realised that, according to casteism then prevalent in India, the four Varnas never had a society based on loving brotherhood or economic structure based on cooperative effort. The four Varnas were motivated by a spirit of mutual hatred. It's no exaggeration to state that the Hindus' social history is not just a class fighting history, but a class war with a lot of anger.

Srila Prabhupada fought the caste discriminatory system at its base by striving incessantly to raise spiritual awareness and realise everything. It has not only offered people affected by caste prejudice within India such possibilities, but has also extended them on a vast scale to the Mleccha, male and female, non-Indian families, and hence also deemed "untouchable" to supporters of a birth-based caste system. In doing so, Prabhupada proved realistically that whatever their caste or class, without bar or restraint, anybody might reach the ultimate spiritual and worldly prosperity guaranteed in the scriptures.

The true Sanatan Dharma was revealed by Prabhupada via properly comprehending the Vedic sacred writings, which taught that every soul in every state of existence should be endowed with respect and dignity. SrilaPrabhupada believed that no one should be denied a chance on the grounds of birth or caste.

Prabhupada urged his disciples to try to substitute a newfound appreciation of divisive and restricting misuse of caste based on birth. At the same time, Prabhupada also criticised certain efforts to abolish caste-based discrimination through policy slogans and superficial appeals for equality, or trying to eradicate any reference of varna from the Hindu tradition. He criticised such well-meaning attempts as cosmetic solutions that could not address the fundamental differences in educational possibilities that lie at the heart of the matter. Equality or brotherhood is unattainable on the material foundation. If you don't completely comprehend that he is not the body but the spiritual soul, you can't become a harijana.

A true Influential Reformer-SrilaPrabhupada versus Raja Ram Mohan Roy

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the founder of the Renaissance Modern India, and a social reformer who launched India's period of enlightenment and liberal change. Ram Mohan Roy was inspired considerably by current Western thinking and emphasised rationality and the modern scientific method.

He was fighting idolatry, caste rigidities, irrelevant rituals and other societal evils. Rammoha's stand against the Hindu idol worship and polytheism was that the authentic version of the Hindu religion available in the Vedas were not followed in the present polytheistic and idolatrous practises, and that current child sacrifice practises, etc. were based on a lack of knowledge of the true meaning of the Vedas. The current practise suggests a deterioration in the real scholarship of the Scriptures and thus is present because of the vested interests of the egoistic clergy who were less concerned in the true welfare and moral growth of the people.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy thought that the Hindu civilization could not make progress unless women were emancipated from inhuman tyranny such as analphabetism, child marriage, sati, purdah. He was recognised for his pioneering thinking and action in emancipating women and particularly in abolishing the marriage of sati and widows.

SrilaPrabhupada brought the soothing balm of the global, non-sectarian message of love of God and love to all living creatures to a world that was tormented with conflict and violence, thereby giving peace, love and joy to millions throughout the world.

SrilaPrabhupada has taught that the wise application of the Vedic teachings can bring societal improvement. The real reformation needed is the reformation of one's own worldly view and heart. Mundane social reform or moral justice might seem attractive to religious and impassioned politicians. However, this cause of social justice nearly always involves fulfilling an ulterior purpose of appealing to vox populi, not establishing dharma or eternal employment of the eternal living. He claimed that science, logic and logical contemporary thinking cannot lead to universally acceptable improvements.

Srila Prabhupada laboured diligently to bring about global, social, cultural, regional and religious change. He administered the relaxing balm of a global non-Sectarian message of love for God and love for all living beings to a world beset with conflict and violence, thereby bringing peace, love and pleasure to millions throughout the world.

SrilaPrabhupada comparative study with other Western prominent social reformers.

Racism & Equality - Social reforms - Srila Prabhupada versus Martin Luther King

Martin Luther King was an American Christian leader and civil rights campaigner leading the United States Civil Rights movement. He was known as the mild, unthreatening racially equal saint. He was greatly inspired by the nonviolence of Mahatma Gandhi in advancing his Civil Rights Movement.

Luther King Jr. Martin Luther aimed at raising public awareness of racism and ending racial discrimination in various sectors, including public transit, employment, voting and education. King mapped a number of minor goals, while aiming for race equality, involving local grassroots efforts for equal rights for African Americans.

The teachings of Srila Prabhupada sparked a spiritual revolution where dedication, simplicity and compassion became the path to live. He intended to construct a house where the whole globe could reside, regardless of caste, faith, colour, gender and so forth.

Srila Prabhupada stated that the material nature entails conflict and dispute, particularly in this Kali Yuga. Therefore, he underlined that he was working towards an agreement, although there are many commitments. He said "There are variety in the material world, but there is no agreement. There are variances in the spiritual realm, yet there is agreement. That's the change. The materialist is unable to adapt the variations and discrepancies render all null."

Therefore, he taught his disciples to maintain Krishna at the centre and so reach consensus in different ways. He termed this Unity in Diversity.

Srila Prabhupada constantly condemned narrow-mindedness and tight-minded thinking and spread liberal broad-minded, charitable opinions which he embodied himself. He tried to establish a society built on love and trust, in which each person learnt to respect others.

Social reforms for Equality - SrilaPrabhupada versus Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela was a revolutionary, political and charitable South African anti-apartheid leader who served as the South African President.

Mandela was a creator of peace. He not only stood up for the disadvantaged, but for the whole society. With his innovative approach to leadership, he inspired generations. He brought his people together via a communal nation love. Even individuals of mixed race,

traditionally seen as the lowest class, loved Mandela. He served others and offered real examples of how these principles might be fulfilled.

He worked on creating interaction platforms for crucial topics. It seeks to promote social justice, peace and healing. Mandela lived with the conviction that everyone can and should make positive changes. All can do something. Everyone can do something. It doesn't have to be big heroic deeds.

Srila Prabhupada taught that we are all equal from the standpoint of God. We are all parts of him; having eternal, personalised ties with God, we are spiritual beings. Everything about "equal opportunity" is about God. However, once we reach the corporeal world, we are subject to karma. This indicates that we have all been placed in temporary bodies with varied attributes – powerful, affluent, educated, handsome, etc. Some bodies are masculine and are unable to carry offspring. Some of them are women and can. On the body level there are many, many distinctions.

As far as bodies in different castes or species of life are concerned, the Lord is just as good to everyone since He treats every living creature as a friend yet retains Himself as a Superson, independent of the conditions of existence. The Lord is present in all bodies regardless of caste, colour creed and so forth. The bodies are material creations of many material modes, yet the soul and super soul of the body have the same spiritual character. A conscious person knows this fully and is genuinely learned and has a vision of the same.

SrilaPrabhupada contributions to the modern world.

SrilaPrabhupada is without a doubt the foremost and distinguished spiritual director and philosopher of this modern period. Not only is he a very prominent and modern academic, psychologist and writer, he imparted the spiritual spark to the west, which makes it excellent in every aspect of life. It is regrettable that the present generation does not fully recognise his enormous contribution, but it is clear that the seeds of his teachings will be produced in due course.

Krishna consciousness is the most perfect topic of education, but instead the materialists waste time examining and studying matter and its delicate and gross combinations. SrilaPrabhupada gives the opportunity and capacity for self-education in subject matter of the higher dimension, transcendental to the gross and subtle matter in his teachings and writings, which can illumine and fulfil that heart and intellect if followed.

Srila Prabhupada therefore requested his scientific students to assemble a team to convince the scholar-class of the people under the Bhaktivedanta Institute. His publications and lectures were aimed to intellectuals, and his major objective were students and professionals

at the University and college. He wanted to preach to scientists and the like. Srila Prabhupada describes how everything can be combined with mundane study and scholarships into Krishna's service. Srila Prabhupada has always emphasised reaching individuals on the higher levels if they have intelligence, as the lower mortals look at them. He thought intellectual minds were more powerful than weapons and so, if the elites adopted Krishna awareness, others would soon follow suit.

Scholar: SrilaPrabhupada was a very good scholar. His writings were appreciated by intellectuals and the world's finest scientists. The comments written in Sanskrit and Bengali from the earlier acharyas describe the highly sophisticated and complicated philosophical topics that the people of our Modern Age cannot understand. SrilaPrabhupada researched and fully comprehended these comments in a transparent and simple language, which was simple and easy to grasp. The core of his teachings was "The Supreme Personality of Godhead is Krishna and we should constantly serve Him.

Science : Science is highly valued and dominates all fields of study in modern times. The origins of life and the cosmos were mocked and compromised as recounted in the Bible. Due to the strength of science and scientists contemporary theologians even describe scriptures according to current science that fear criticism or persecution of the scientific fraternity. They were glad to keep religion alive, the second weakness of science.

Anyone other than Srila Prabhupada can stand up to Western scientists proud of their telescopes and satellites and confidently say "The Sun is closer to the world than the Moon."

He never believed their concept that the moon was the earth's tiny satellite and used every chance to disdain them. Although the scientists could support their ideas based on study, tests, material-sensory discoveries, university funding etc, Srila Prabhupada solely relied on the Shastra to oppose them.

Often he would reply "I have no scientific training," yet even then I challenge them...

Srila Prabhupada's contribution to modern science

1. Life begets Life- Contrary to modern scientific beliefs of origin of life from matter, Srila Prabhupada's revolutionary concept Life comes from Life is an eye opener and a great contribution which the world 's philosophers and scientists will look back and admire.
2. The different branches of modern viewpoints and research, although varied proposes the origin of the universe as chance. Srila Prabhupada's theistic and very rational teachings will completely synthesise these varieties of branches into a logical conclusion of a well-planned design as the cause of origin. Srila Prabhupada's teachings clearly outline how, why and the person behind the cause of the universe.

3. Due to the new trends that Srila Prabhupada introduced incredible opportunities opened up that could lead to advancement in science and scientific thoughts. The presently held materialists scientific dogma was challenged by Srila Prabhupada and he presented the viewpoint from the Vedic point of view to many of the qualified scientists. Unless radical thoughts and viewpoints are encouraged and explored major breakthroughs wouldn't have happened in science as historically proved by Einstein, Galileo, Copernicus etc.
4. Although many of the scientists were atheistic and dogmatic, some did come to discuss with Srila Prabhupada, who gave them directions from Vedic epistemology and ontology and how it can be correlated with science. He encouraged them to first understand the spiritual perspective and then to do relevant scientific research. The approach he advised should be top – down, descending and not bottom-up or ascending. Srila Prabhupada strongly and convincingly presented many such viewpoints to the scientists who came to meet him and thus gave chance to revolutionize science.
5. Quoting from the Shastras Srila Prabhupada gave many important directions to the scientific community to explore advanced scientific research.
6. Srila Prabhupada presented to the world the vedic astronomy which gives an insight into how God perceived the universe, which otherwise was impossible for mankind to know.

Many are religious, yet they don't believe in God's existence. Srila Prabhupada demonstrated the existence of God as an actuality via his teachings.

Philosophy

The western philosophy, more dedicated to dark subtleties, distances itself from the actual reality. There is God's presence and hand in every event and contemporary thinkers ignore this fundamental reality. Therefore, without this basic knowledge, modern philosophers are kept high and dry while looking for the reason for the cosmos and the countless occurrences. Thus, the cosmos is described as ridiculous and meaningless. The masses look at these thinkers and these opinions are misled.

The teachings of Srila Prabhupada provided the Western world a sense of the true philosophy of bhāgavata-tattva-vijñāna, the science of the absolute truth. Srila Prabhupada, as he explained in his book "Beyond illusion and doubt," has cleared up the incomprehension of the stupid and useless notions of modern philosophers. He offered the Westerners an idea of the genuine and complete philosophy, which could not be denied and asked them to deliver it to the public well, after studying it properly.

Social Criticism

Srila Prabhupada often criticised material society events for the common people of today's age for taking care solely of the material body without knowing that the true purpose is to achieve Visnu, Na teViduhsvārtha-gatim hi visnum. This was the underlying source of all society's troubles. He often branded sociologists, economics and political theorists as rascals and idiots because they just groped in the darkness without understanding it is Hare Krishna to chant and be joyful that the final answer to all issues. The only chance for the insane civilization is the agricultural, deity centred on simple life and lofty thinking.

Psychology

To be Krishna conscious is the original nature of the soul where it finds full happiness and bliss and Srila Prabhupada, as a practical psychologist helped many troubled people rediscover this happiness by making them Krishna consciousness. Based on the requirement he sometimes encouraged or at times he chastised people. He was good at putting nervous newcomers at ease and he cut the pride of the fools. He encouraged people to take up Krishna consciousness and was expert in kindling any small spark of Krishna consciousness present in anyone's heart. He never saw anyone clinically or as a client but saw everyone as a forgetful devotee of Krishna. Those who were envious of him threw accusations of brainwashing but the last thing Srila Prabhupada wanted was to manipulate anyone for personal gain. Being very compassionate his directions came from his heart and not from the mind.

The Present Hindu Revival

After the Independence in 1947 many educated Hindus, embraced more materialistic lives losing faith in the culture of their ancestors. Vedic culture to them meant something of the past which is meaningless for present age. They lost interest in traditional values, being embarrassed to profess them and were strongly attracted to western views and lifestyle. Srila Prabhupada very firmly preached against such tendencies and appealed to fellow Indian not to give up their spiritual and religious culture which went back so many centuries.

Srila Prabhupada had foreseen all this and hence he brought with him the western disciples during his visit to India from the United States after successfully establishing Iskcon and many temples there. Seeing the westerners accepting and practicing their culture the Indians were enticed and attracted back to their own culture. With Srila Prabhupada's efforts many Westerners have accepted Indian citizenship and are accepted by Indians as perfect sadhus, sannyasis and brahmanas and gurus. Many Indians also learn their culture from these westerners. Iskcon, a household name now in India, also leads in grandeur Deity worship practices for which it is well known.

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