

### **About the Author:-**

Sri Ravipudi venktadri here in after called "R.V", is a great radical humanist from Andhra. He is 95 years old, a veteran who has been active in the movement for the last 70 years. He is associated with Avula Gopala Krishnamurthy called A.G.K, the unforgettable and dynamic Guru of many a rationalist in Andhra. He is also associated with M.N.Roy, the founder of radical humanism and with Kaviraju, the leading social rebel and an atheist, who is like Periyar of Tamil nadu for Andhra.

RV besides being a riveting speaker and restless humanist is a prolific writer. He has written, so far, 70 books in 70 years which are published in 23 volumes of 8,000 pages in Telugu which is his mother tongue. It is a huge output and a tremendous contribution to the movement of Radical Humanism. Now, at the age of 95 he has undertaken to translate in to English by himself, some of his select writings. The two volumes are already published and unveiled on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2016 at R.H Center, Inkollu. He is also promising a third volume in English, on Rationalism, by February, 2017. He proved himself as good a writer in English as in his own mother tongue. Being a disciple of late Sri.A.G.K who is being forgotten because of his sparse writings, R.V will be remembered long after him as his contribution to literature on rationalism is immense. I often compare him and A.G.K with Plato and Socrates as the latter's philosophy was only found in the classical works written by Plato. R.V, by all standards, is an ocean of knowledge.

### **The Purpose of his writings:-**

The idea of knowledge for him is open-minded and scientific. He writes " Knowledge grows and improves. Knowledge which does not grow and remains dwarf is just ignorance but not knowledge". He goes on further saying that rationalism would not accept "dictatorship of ideas and trusteeship of ideas". This is resonant of what M.N.Roy once wrote: "Human knowledge will always be defective, because always there will be more to know". R.V says in his own words "Scientific prospective has become the motive of all my writings". His follower Mr. Meduri writes in his foreword that revolution in ideas is the sole aim of Ravipudi's literature. R.V himself answers why this "revolution in ideas" now; he goes on sadly that in spite of the fact that modern scientific knowledge is growing by leaps and bounds, and new doctrines have sprung forth, the influence of old religions has not diminished to the extent it should. Hence it can be safely asserted that the purpose of his writings is to reduce and undo the influence of religions on the people which we all know have lethal effect on the peoples' minds and their life processes.

### **Nature of his writings:-**

Two qualities stand out prominently in his writings, as a writer. (i.) His sweep and scope in various fields of knowledge is simply astounding. After talking of the motion of planets, he goes on to the composition of the atoms. Then, he moves on to Max Planck's Quantum Theory, which he writes, is not against determinism. A reader like me wonders, 'who is this plank? What is quantum theory, and what is the meaning of determinism!' He further goes on to talk of the elements, not the ones we know

such as air, water, fire, earth, sky, and so on, but the 92 elements on the earth "which we have been able to find out. As though it is not enough he adds that "Up to now we are able to create some 30 more elements, following the lawful structure of the elements". My God what elements! I know only 4 or 5 elements. I am not sure of them, either. I remember to have read of those innumerable elements in connection with making of nuclear bomb or so. When did this man read nuclear science? For what I know, R.V was not a student of science. He was not even a student, in a formal sense! He further cites the theory of Relativity of Einstein, talking of time and space. I know next to nothing about it, to be quite frank.

Then, of course, philosophy and theology are his own turfs: Aastika- Naastika dualism, accepting and denying the existence of soul, god, and the heavens is interesting. In fact, he says, Aastikas who deny the existence of this universe (Maya) are Naastikas, and those who say this universe is real, and that the soul, the ulterior soul (god), and heavens, are unreal, should be called Aastikas. It should be vice-versa, so to say. He turned the conventional nomenclature on their head. He further adds that 'Naastikas' is an abusive term. Their real and original name was 'LOKAYATAS' which means, that which has filled the whole world (Lokayatam). This Lokayatam, he tells us, used to be called 'Charvakam' (Charu+Waakku) which means good or beautiful word. R.V affirms that there was no such person called 'Charwaka'.

(ii.) Another quality which I found striking in R.V's writings is that the writer has the knack of making complex simple. A few examples, here, will suffice. (a) Space and time used to confound me when I attempted the impossible, namely to unravel the theory of relativity of Einstein. It became clear to me when I read somewhere in R.V's volume "whatever event happens, it happens in space and time". (b) 'Cause and effect' always used to confuse me, until I read what R.V wrote in one place, "Whatever event precedes is the cause and whatever event follows, it is effect" and that all modern scientific knowledge is the essence of cause and effect principle. (c) He explains the principle of objectivity in very simple terms; he tells us "objectivity means the nature of the objects". (d) So also with dictatorship: in his own way, he says "Dictatorship allows to say 'yes', but it does not allow to say 'no' ". He continues "We hold that ideological dictatorship is itself religion". (e) In a similar way, about science: "Science is knowing the laws of nature ..... Let science be divided into many branches and sub-branches. What all the science finally perceives is physicality and physical reality". (f) About light, he writes: "A question arose whether light travels as particles or waves. After 200 years, it was decided, it travels both ways --- the light particles travel in waves".

### **Contents of his writings:-**

Here, I can only give a few samples of what he wrote on several topics. His views on whatever he attempted to explain are extremely well reasoned inferences and conclusions, which are strictly derived from scientific premises. They are straight, simple, and upfront, strictly in accordance with epistemological criteria. His views on science, on religion, on god, and on scientific outlook are presented below, though in a rather sketchy manner, mostly in his own words.

### **On Science:-**

Law-governedness is the basis of science. All things in nature are governed by laws. Take, for instance, the sun. If it rises today in one direction, and another day in another direction, with various temperatures, forms and speeds, then we can't have any lawful knowledge about the sun, and can't forecast the sun rise, the sun set, and the eclipses, and thousand other particulars, beforehand. In fact, in the matter of every object in nature, be it water, fire, air, salt, milk, poison, trees etc, they all have lawful properties, and we can identify laws. Then, we can mention the nature of the objects: we can tell that the iron rod sinks in water, the wooden rod floats on water, the salt dissolves in water, the milk enhances the growth of man, the poison kills him and that the fire burns etc.

How much the law-governedness of nature has come into the knowledge of man, can be understood, R.V highlights, from the interplanetary voyage. He describes it thus: In the infinite universe, our galaxy is moving, but not static. In a corner of that galaxy, our sun is also moving. Our rotating earth is also moving along with the sun and galaxy. The moon being a satellite, is running around the earth and following the earth. The sizes, atmospheres and gravitational powers of all these are different. In that situation, R.V dramatically points out, a man on the moving earth is capable of constructing an artificial satellite. He is able to send them to other satellites and planets. Those artificial satellites are able to follow the dictates of the technicians, to take photos of those natural satellites and planets, and also bring the soil samples from them. This shows, he affirms, that the man is grasping the law governedness of nature and able to forecast events. He infers that law-governedness is the only cause for it and that "there are neither chantings nor divine wonders".

So also, man is a part of nature and as such law-governed. "Urge for freedom" and "quest for knowledge" are in his nature. Once, he broke away from the fetters of religion, he was remarkable for "passionate worship of beauty and partiality for the joy of life". It is "aesthetic against the ascetic", in Lord Acton's words.

### **On Religion:-**

In his own words, religion means primitive science. The only thing is that it did not change as time requires. That is why, it arrests the growth of knowledge. He elaborates it, by saying that all the knowledge OF ONE AGE was considered as the FINAL one and became religion. It was considered once, for example, that the earth is flat, the sky is its top, and the stars are attached to the sky. On deep examination it was found false. But in religion the whole knowledge did not change. That is how, the religion came to stagnate knowledge. R.V gives many such examples: similar is the case with the earth's motion, eclipses etc. Man couldn't understand, likewise, in his first attempt, the root causes of riches and poverty, birth and death, pleasures and sorrow, bodily diseases, and mental experiences; he attributed them to some other superhuman being. For solving them he saw the source not in him but in some divine beings. Such ideas, he says, became traditions. And they became religions. Thus, irrationality crept into human society. (Page.131 Vol.2). Consequently religion placed before men too many lies in the name of salvation (Moksha). He concludes that if rationalism is the origin of the birth of religion, irrationality is the reason for its continuation.

### **On God:-**

If Epicurus said "God is the product of delusion", R.V goes on to say "The appearance of gods is only a mental illusion. There are no souls, rebirths, and other heavens and hells". Universe was there before man appeared as a result of evolution. God was created by man in his quest for knowing cause of the existence of the world. This, R.V puts in his own inimitable way. "After all, god was born yesterday or the day before. But his father, the man, was born far more earlier than god". But, with scientific knowledge, R.V tells us, "That god is now dead". But, what he calls, "the theist doctors want to give life to god-concept in the form of soul". But they failed in their attempt. Because, soul is mind, and mind is a physical matter which appears at a particular stage of evolutionary process. There is nothing like a non-physical force, he concludes.

In a rare showcasing of logic, R.V takes recourse to a flat denial of god-concept. His reasoning is straightforward and unanswerable. He argues thus: "Objectivity means the nature of the object. Many phrases are used to denote the attributelessness of god. In Sanskrit language, they are *Niranjan, Nirvikalpa, Avyakta, Bhavatita* etc". He asks, if we attribute qualitylessness to god, it means there is no god. If one says that unknown is known, and one who is beyond ideas has come into one's ideas, it is virtually trash and unbelievable. God is a patent lie, he asserts.

### **On Scientific Outlook:-**

It was Helvetius who famously held "Men are born ignorant, not stupid; they are made stupid by education. A perfect education is needed to make men perfect". R.V bemoans that science education becomes mechanical, if man cannot understand what science stands for and how it should be connected with life and beliefs. After all, science stands for "urge for freedom" and "quest for truth". It is said, truth is the daughter of reason.

R.V's main complaint is that while we enjoy all facilities that modern science gives us, we don't connect the results of scientific knowledge to our social life. He says, that is what is called "religious attitude". He writes "Our mind can throw away Copernicus and Newton, but it cannot antagonize either Vyasa or Valmiki". We could root out small-pox through the vaccination of Jenner who introduced it. But the Poleramma or Batakamma culture has not left us. He warns: "leaving away the scientific outlook and its philosophical thought processes, if we develop only technology, what we obtain is a dangerous progress by multiplication. It paves the way for the annihilation of humans".

**Conclusion:-**

R.V in his two volumes, which he translated from Telugu in to English at the unlikely age of 95, has dealt with extreme clarity and deep passion, on many basic topics like science, religion, god, education, scientific outlook and many others. His thoughts on all these, are extremely thought provoking. I suggest, they should not only be read by all, but also the schools and colleges prescribe parts of these volumes, for study in their curriculum, in abridged form, if necessary. I have no doubt they could be highly stimulating to the younger generations.

**Note:-**

This is the full text of the talk given by Sri Y.V.Reddy at R.H Center, Inkollu, on 11/09/2016 on the occasion of unveiling of two volumes on "Rationalism" by Sri Ravipudi Venkatadri--- who rendered into English some of his earlier writings in Telugu.