

Swarajya - Autonomous Evolution of Communities

(The role and importance of the *Sant Parampara*)

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Propositions

1. Every individual has an identity that is a COMMUNITARIAN identity, that is, every person identifies himself / herself as a member of a community (social group) that, most often, is localized geographically.
2. Each Community evolves autonomously and continuously. This evolution is influenced by changes in living and working environment, by consensual acceptance of newer social and working relationships; often influenced by 'imparted vision' (of local *Sants*) of better relationships that would ensure sustenance and continuity of the Community as it evolves.
3. Each Community bases its living and productive activities on its *Lokavidya*, which is neither static nor preordained, but which itself evolves and enriches continuously with the Community, often with inputs from the Knowledge systems of other Communities.

The Concept of Swarajya

Swarajya essentially maps this autonomous evolution of Communities.

Among the many facets of this *evolution* and factors that influence this evolution, we shall examine the 'role' of the *Sant Pamampara* through a few well-known and venerated examples.

Principally, the *Sants* were the 'Great Helmsmen' who, through their teachings, put forth a vision, for the evolution and sustenance of the (geographically) localized Communities and their *Lokavidya*, incorporating a worldview and its *dharma*.

As a Community evolved, changes took *place* in its productive activities and in the relations of production among the various constituent, *Lokavidya*-based, sub-communities (such as *jatis*, *upajatis* etc). These often led to contentions and conflicts, especially in the *swadharma* of individuals and sub-communities; which threatened the sustenance and stability of the Community. At such junctures, oftentimes, the *Sants* put forth a vision of the manner in which the evolution ought to proceed, mitigating the emergent conflicts and providing a newer path and, at times, newer identity for the sustenance and stability of the Community.

We shall briefly look at the *teachings* of Thiruvalluvar, Basaweshwara and Guru Gobind Singh, with particular reference to their teachings on *Swadharma* and resolution of conflicts between different *jatis and upajatis*.

Note that these *Sants* were separated in space and time and their teachings were relevant for the (geographically) local regions and communities; though the principles underlying their teachings had (in the broadest sense) universal appeal and relevance.

All of them emphasized the importance and need to adhere to certain cardinal principles in *Swadharma*, such as, to follow one's duty (*karma yoga*) inasmuch as socially productive work/activity was concerned. (*Kayaka* in Basaweshwara's teachings, *Dharm Dee Kirat Karnee* in Guru Gobind Singh's teachings) and to share the surplus for the benefit of the community (*Porul* (wealth) regulated by *Aram* (dharma) in Thiruvalluvar's, *Dasoha* in Basaweshwara's and *Dasvand Denaa* in Guru Gobind Singh's teachings). The accumulation of 'wealth/surplus', while performing one's socially productive work activity, to increase one's privileges and/or position in the community was never part of *Swadharma*. All such work/activity was to be seen as mutually equal and important and there was no inherent hierarchy in (*Lokavidya*-based) work/activity.

We notice at once that these principles bear a great *similarity* with one another, though espoused for separated regions and during separated eras, indicating the inherent autonomy of evolution and the commonality of vision; which probably formed the basis for the concept of *Vasudaiva kutumbakam*.

Another very important aspect, of *these* teachings, relates to inter-*jati* hierarchies and conflicts thereof and their resolution.

Both Basaweshwara and Guru Gobind Singh sought to provide a 'new' identity for those who wished to participate in *affirmative* action against (caste) *jati*-based hierarchies and the corresponding work-related hierarchies, through their proposal for *Veerashaiva* (Basaweshwara) and *Khalsa* (Guru Gobind Singh) identities.

These proposals met with very positive response from the communities to which they were addressed and we see *that* the *Khalsa Panth* survives to uphold the tenets of Guru Gobind Singh even today.

Conclusion

The role and importance of the *Sant Parampara* in guiding the evolution of the local communities is an important aspect of *Swarajya*.