
Understanding Swami Vivekananda

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ABSTRACT:

19th century India was a different society. She was under the clutches of foreign alien influence. India had lost its past glory. It was in its formative era. India was trying to free herself from all bondages. It was an era of cultural and spiritual renaissance. During this period there was the emergence of Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). Who showed path through his philosophy of Vedanta. In this paper I have tried to summarize his ideas on Vedanta and other social cultural and political vision.

Key words: *Vedanta, Spirituality, Nationalism, Religion, Renaissance, Socialism, Anarchist, Liberals, Communist, Socialists*

BIOGRAPHY:

Swami Vivekananda (12 January 1863 – 4 July 1902), born Narendranath Dutta was an Indian Hindu monk and chief disciple of the 19th-century Indian mystic Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He was a key figure in the introduction of the Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world and is credited with raising interfaith awareness, bringing Hinduism to the status of a major world religion during the late 19th century. He was a major force in the revival of Hinduism in India, and contributed to the concept of nationalism in colonial India. Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission. He is perhaps best known for his speech which began, "Sisters and brothers of America ...," in which he introduced Hinduism at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893.

Born into an aristocratic Bengali family of Calcutta, Vivekananda was inclined towards spirituality. He was influenced by his Guru, Ramakrishna Deva, from whom he learnt that all living beings were an embodiment of the divine self; therefore, service to God could be rendered by service to mankind. After Ramakrishna's death, Vivekananda toured the Indian subcontinent extensively and acquired first-hand knowledge of the conditions prevailing in British India. He later travelled to the United States, representing India at the 1893 Parliament of the World Religions. Vivekananda conducted hundreds of public and private lectures and classes, disseminating tenets of Hindu philosophy in the United States, England and Europe. In India, Vivekananda is regarded as a patriotic and his birthday is celebrated there as National Youth Day.

HIS VISION ON INDIA AND VEDANTA:

The idea of India as a distinct civilization and cultural habitat found its most creative expression in Swami. It was his persistent beliefs that India was capable of giving back to the world as much as it took from the world thereby establish its rightful claim in the assembly of nations.

Vivekananda believed that a country's future depends on its people, and his teachings focused on human development. He wanted "to set in motion a machinery which will bring noblest ideas to the doorstep of even the poorest and the meanest". Vivekananda believed that the essence of Hinduism was best expressed in the Vedanta philosophy.

His ideals were Buddha, who had no metaphysics but heart full compassion, and the contemporary philanthropist Ishwar Chandra, who rediscovered human warmth and innocence among rustic santhals, at some distance from the pretentious world of Kolkata.

One defect in Advaita (Vedanta) was its being worked so long on the spiritual plane only. Now the time has come to make it practical.

Metaphysical truth could turn quite meaningless when entirely divorced from social realities.

He believed that a grossly materialist west was in need of spiritual enlightenment.

He also believed that England and America were more fertile grounds for Vedanta to succeed since compared with India, they were societies that had secured a state of material development that could better sustain human life.

Religion was not for empty stomach.

He had the ability to combine a programme for social empowerment with efforts to restore the individual his innate self-belief and dignity.

Social emancipation of masses was his objective which he hoped to carry out somewhat in the same manner of the Jesuits, combining religious zeal with an ethically ennobling mission to educate.

He did expect the poor and the unlettered to come flocking to schools rather he anticipated present day voluntarism by exhorting a band of dedicated young men and women to tour the country teaching people rudimentary science and familiarizing them with the artefacts of material culture in a manner that might help improve their everyday life.

‘A hundred thousand men and women fired with the zeal of holiness fortified with the eternal faith of the Lord, nerved to lion’s courage by their sympathy for the fallen and downtrodden.

He did not support knowledge gained from scriptures rather he supported intuitive experiences.

He wanted root and branch reforms.

Ideal man had to acquire four qualities. (a) Abhaya (fearlessness) (b) Ahimsa (non-violence) (c) Asanga (non-attachment) (d) Ananda divine bliss

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The influence of Swami Vivekananda on the Indian Nationalist Movement is well-known. Swami Vivekananda was not only a visionary, or a monk but a nationalist and a reformer par excellence. Many in our own country think that religion and mysticism and social amelioration and political and economic reconstruction cannot unite and declare that the secular and spiritual ideals are polar opposites. Such a notion has been responsible for the gross misrepresentations of

the spirit of Indian philosophy, religion and culture, but the mystics, the saints and the sages of India prove standing refutation of this gross misconception. India's foreign domination is also attributed to her religion which is considered to be dreamy, idealistic, fatalistic, world-denying, pessimistic and unethical and other - worldly. Swami Vivekananda's contribution to a faithful and sympathetic representation of India's aspirations and ideals in foreign lands cannot be gainsaid. Swami Vivekananda created not only a lofty Advaita Vedantic Ideal under a new order religious known as Ramkrishna Mission but founded a new epoch in the life of the Indian people also on social, economic, and political fronts in consistency with India's past heritage and in harmony with the Western ideals. Swami Vivekananda is that man who has understood the Ashwath tree" having its root (One) above and branches (manifold) below and (which is) avyaya (which will never perish) Srimand Bhagwat Geeta XV-I.

To my knowledge there has not been a single work so far exclusively on Swami Vivekananda's social and political philosophy. There is a vast proportion of unutilized materials with respect to his political and social views. He was a protagonist of Hindu Social ideas and a precursor of socialism. He championed in his own time the causes of the down-trodden masses and the exploited poor class. He was much in advance of his age and prophesied the rule of the proletariats. It is necessary, therefore, that a thorough study of his social and political ideals be made particularly at a time when the younger generation feels attracted to the Western ideals without looking to its own treasures suitable to its own surroundings. The present work, therefore, is a systematic study of his social and political views in the light of modern Western doctrines, for only in this way can we adequately appreciate the treasures of India's constructive thinking on social and political ideals which are not so well-known. This work therefore, will prove a contribution to India's social and political thought at a time when much is talked in the world-councils about peace, equality, fraternity, co-operation etc. India may make some contributions to the mitigation of tension and unrest widespread in the world.

Though he did not present the world any systematic political thought which can be labelled under any particular ism, but through his voluminous writings, he left a rich legacy of political ideas, conceived and believed by him in the context of social, political and economic tendencies of his time.

His ideas are speculative as well as realistic, metaphysical as well as practical. They are flexible as well as accommodative so as to please the Liberals, Socialist, Communists, Anarchist, Conservatives and even Revivalist.

Like Edmund Burke, he is more rightly acclaimed as a philosophical political rather than a political philosopher.

CONCLUSION:

A great concern of today's world is political chaos and youth restlessness. Today the youth are restless frustrated and emotional disturbed. For this kind of society and changing dimension of social relations swami Vivekananda stood as an awaker par excellence. Though he lived as short span of time, he made an intense life both inward and outward.

According to J L Nehru, 'His writings are as fresh as valuable today as when they were written. They will continue to inspire not only the present but coming generations also'.

Concluding the idea of swami ji I must say that he was a man nature rarely produce. He was a saint yet an activist. He believed in God yet supported materialism. He was a theoretician yet a man of action.

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