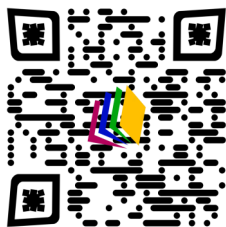


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Swami Vivekananda: His Philosophy and Vision on Ideal Society

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ABSTRACT:

The paper discusses about the life, philosophy, and vision of an ideal society of Swami Vivekananda. A deeper analysis has been made on his views on the spiritual humanism, the institution of caste system, giving the deprived their lost individuality, a society free of superstitions, harmony of balance between spiritualistic and materialistic society, a system of education meant for man making and character building and above all a religion based on scientific temper and rationalism. The paper also has highlighted how Vivekananda's Vedantic ideas underlines a unique blend of East and West culture which regenerated the virtuous aspect of Hinduism unearthing its reach potentiality serving the humankind.

KEY WORDS: Spiritualist, Yogi, Satya Loka, Vedantist, Metaphysician, Naren, Neo-Vedantic, Sadhana, Advaita Philosophy

“He is not a pond, he is a reservoir. He is not a pitcher or jug, he is a veritable barrel. He is not a minnow or sardine, he is a huge red-eyed carp. He is not an ordinary sixteen-petalled lotus, he is a glorious lotus with a thousand petals.

He is not a twig floating in a river-a twig that sinks even if a bird alights upon it. Rather he is a great tree-trunk carrying men, beasts & merchandise upon its chest”.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramhans

Introduction

In the entire annals of Indian philosophy, the place of Swami Vivekananda is distinctive and significant one. He has been called a spiritual leader, a social reformer, a brilliant philosopher, a *Yogi*, a writer, an orator, an educationist, a subtle metaphysician, an ardent patriot, a realized & illuminated soul, an outstanding personality, etc. in one way. The unique greatness of Swamiji was well acknowledged by Professor J. H. Wright of the Department of Greek Studies at the Harvard University who described him as more learned than all Professors put together who joined in the World Parliament of Religions (Sharma, 2019, pp. 169-170). Again Deputy Professor of

Modern Languages and Comparative Philology, Friedrich Max Muller of Oxford University being overwhelmed by the personality of Swami Vivekananda in the chilly night of Winter came down to London Railway Station to see-off Swamiji which well speaks about his uniqueness and distinctiveness. The force and power in the words of Vivekananda has been well recognised by his biographer Romain Rolland, the great European savant, who said, "I cannot touch these sayings of his scattered as they are through the pages of books without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transport, must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero" (2013, p. III). In the true sense of the term, he was a saint of higher order, gifted with supreme knowledge, did not, as has been stated, seem to belong to this world. It is said that he belonged to the "*Satya Loka*" where only seven saints of higher order live and they are always in meditation. Once a portion of this *Satya Loka* melted & soon there emerged a small boy with a radiant glow & a sweet smile on his face. He approached one of the saints and asked him to follow him. That boy, it is said, was Sri Ramakrishna Parmahans (Gadadhar was his childhood's name), the Master, an "*avatar*" of God and that saint was Swami Vivekananda. He was born with a mission, i.e. to make the people spiritually oriented.

Swami Vivekananda was born on 12th January 1863 in an aristocratic *Kshatriya* family of Calcutta. His real name was Narendranath Dutta, popularly known as "Naren" named by his father and he was named as Viveshwar by his revered mother. He assumed the name of "Vivekananda" (the one who is inspired by reason) in 1893 while proceeding to participate in the

Chicago Parliament of Religions as a monk (Gaub, 2015, p. 95). Vivekananda is considered as the Hindu Napoleon and he was one of the most prominent religious thinkers of the 19th century India. He was a mountainous intellect and retained a mystic consciousness like Plotinus & Baruch Spinoza, the harbinger of *Advita-Vedanta*, gifted with a prophet's vision, the spiritual *guru* of the world, precursor of the Bengali militant nationalism (Tyagi, 1998, p. 163) and an incomparable social reformer. He was the first Indian who in the late 19th century preaches & propagated all over the world the fundamental philosophy of Hindu religion. In other words, he was a *Vedantist*, who preached the concept of Universal religion; the first socialist of India who was committed to the cause of class-less society; a leading nationalist, championing India's independence; an internationalist advocating an inter-dependent world order; a social reformist making crusade against the social prejudices and above all a humanist who believed in the inner goodness of every man. He was the link between present & the past, East and the West. It would be an injustice to think of Vivekananda as a mere Hindu (cyclonic) monk. Thus, at a time he was a humanist, a patriot, a philosopher, a religious preacher who 'awakened' the people of Hinduism from its age-old slumber and infused into it a new life and new blood. The canvas of his thought ranged from the spiritual to the earthen, from traditional to modern, and from science to myth. In the World Parliament of Religions, he tried to remove many misgivings in Hinduism and made the people crystal clear about its inner essence and its spiritual superiority. This great disciple of Ramakrishna breathed his last breath on 4th July 1902 while he was staying with his brother-monks at Belur *Math*, before he had attained the age of 40, an age at which richer life begins for most men. In the words of a *Gurbhai*

“..... He died in truth, of his own accord. He was born as a *Yogi* and he died as a *Yogi*.” Though he lived for only 39 years, but in a very short span of his life he worked ceaselessly for the good of the society.

Understanding the Background

Vivekananda was the first in the history of Indian philosophy to draw the picture of an ideal society, which finds its expression in his talks, conversations, letters and writings. Swami Vivekananda considered society as a divine institution. He stated that “That society is the greatest where the highest truths become practical. That is my opinion, and if society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so and the sooner, the better”. To him, an ideal society has to be structured in such a way, that the divinity of man can be realised. First of all, this ideal society has to guarantee the liberty of thoughts and actions which are the preconditions of life and growth in general. According to Vivekananda the sense of immortality, gives us tremendous freedom to act without fear or temporal concern. “Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation must go”.

On the aspect of equality Vivekananda believed in unity of variety which he took as the plan of the creator. He said men are never equal and they are always born with differentiation by their natural capacities. So, sameness in physical forms or social status can never be attained, and to do away with all the differences would also bring death and annihilation. As different men have different ideals so there is in need of everyone to realise that in the best possible way. What he meant was the elimination of all privileges. To him, “We preach neither social equality nor inequality, but that every being has the same rights, and insist upon freedom of thought and action in every way” (Rustau, 1998,

p. 267).

He was very much worried about the continuous suffering of human being which in the result of various underlying reasons such as ignorance, disharmony, divisiveness and confinement of consciousness within finitudes. As the incarnation of patriotism, human dignity and self-reliance he worked for the well-being of the masses. He was deeply devoted to the cause of the liberation of the poor and the downtrodden. It was owing to his wish and works for the cause of the downtrodden in India that Swamiji left his family members in the most pathetic condition.

According to Swamiji, education of the masses is the prerequisite of every social change. By education he meant that the downtrodden and poor gets the means to solve their problems by themselves. He understood education in the sense of putting chemicals together, to give the stuff out of which the masses themselves will get the strength to change their life conditions. Through education, the masses will acquire faith in their own selves, and they will get self-awareness and self-confidence.

Vivekananda said that caste is ‘an inevitable phenomenon of all human life’. It is an essential feature of all societies, be it ancient or modern and ‘civilised’ or ‘uncivilised’. So any attempt for the eradication of it is an irrational act. What is indispensable is the rationalisation of the caste system and bringing it back into the spirit of inclusiveness. To Vivekananda, the caste system is not only a natural order, but it is more than that; it is an ideal. This is in the conformity with the ancient Hindu texts particularly Bhagavad-Gita

which tells that performance of *Swadharma* for the purpose of securing and preserving ‘the solidarity of society’. Hence it is an idea of solidarity rather unity and the direction of which is growth.

Vivekananda said to his audiences, in his lectures to aspire the greater virtue of acceptance of all religions rather than be content with the virtue of merely tolerating others. Tremendous sense of harmony enables us to enjoy apparent diversity in thoughts, actions, beliefs and worship. He believed that the rejection of the other stems out from our own fears and insecurities, and his clarion call was for all to awaken from this hypnotic, weak state. Applying the *Vedantic* notion of the cosmic *Brahman* from which everything emerges and into which all dissolves without any distinction, Vivekananda called upon each person to accept the other. He advocated for religious acceptance not toleration which implies to superiority complex, literally mean someone taken as wrong and allowed to exist out of generosity. Thus we should become not only tolerant but should also be appreciative of one another and rise above the sectarian boundaries where the solutions to all problems will flow from empathy. This is an understanding of the principle of life – that each is either as divine or as flawed as the other.

He criticized the present system of fighting among different religious sects. Many wars have been fought, much blood have been shed in the in the name of religion. But that is not true religion. Swamiji stressed that India required to trade Indian spirituality for the west’s material and modern culture and was strongly after India’s scientific modernisation (Mukherji R. , 2019, p. 11). Swamiji asked men to acknowledge women as the symbol of the Divine Mother and not to consider them as the

child producing machine. This discussion has attempted to analyse Vivekananda’s vision on an ideal society.

Vivekananda’s Vision on an Ideal Society

Concept of Equality of Men/ Human Being

The concept of an ideal society as envisioned by Vivekananda is broadly premised upon the notion of equality of human being. His address to the gathering at World Parliament of Religions in Chicago that started with “my Sisters and Brothers of America ...” can be taken as the utterance of his firm belief on the equality of man regardless of his nationality, faith, sex or colour. As a true democrat, Swamiji believed that no nation could gain physical liberty without physical equality. So his concept of freedom leads to concept of equality. He emphasizes, “Equality is the sign of the free”. By equality, he did not mean any special type of equality viz. social, economic or political. He was concerned with the process & not the form of equality. He stood for equal rights and opportunities. He was opposed to privileges & discrimination in any form. He denounced inequality as a bane of human life & a source of all bondages - physical, mental & spiritual. In reality, his concept of equality reflects his spiritual thinking which lays stress on the gradual growth of the individual. While expounding ‘the modern India’ he remarked, “Forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper are thy flesh & blood, thy brothers”.

Concept of Service to Mankind

Swamiji said that the substance of all prayers & worship is to be pure and good to others. He sought to have the vision of God through services. His passion for service to mankind originated from his

father, Vishwanath Dutta, whose charitable, liberal and caring outlook and compassion for his associates and the poor encouraged him to a great extent. His mother's compassionate heart for the poor and hopeless profoundly influenced and shaped his personality as well (Chakraborti, 2012, p. 4). According to him, "the service to the poor, downtrodden and weakest sections of society regardless of caste, creed, religion, gender or nationality, is service to God". (Sindaram, 2012, p. 5). "He who sees *Shiva* in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships *Shiva*". Therefore, everyone must be above his self and come out to help others and serve the needy. He also said that "Go from village to village, do good to humanity and to the world at large. Go to hell yourself to bring salvation for others... When death is so certain, it is better to die for a good cause". He advised the people to worship and offer the poor what they offered to the image of God in the temple. He said that one should serve a man to find God. He also expressed his aspiration to be born again and suffer thousands of miseries and thereby he could worship the only God – the sum total of all the souls. In fact, the Ramakrishna Mission was founded by Swamiji in order to enable his disciples to move from village to village and help the needy. He believed service to humanity to be the only religion and considered all the other ritual practices as sheer foolishness.

Giving the Deprived Back Their Lost Individuality

The edifice of Vivekananda's ideal society stands on the foundation of his compassion for the downtrodden and the deprived which constitutes the core of his ideal society. He was a true humanist from the core of his heart. His social thoughts were always centred on the life and

conditions of the common man. He realised that the downtrodden classes, the cobbler and the sweeper had to be rescued from perennial exploitation – "Worship Shiva in the poor, the diseased and the weak (Rolland -) service to men is service to God. He emphasised economic dimension of religion and for that he declared himself as a socialist – "I do not appreciate socialism. But half bread is better than none". He emphasised that the labouring masses are the backbone of the any nation. If these poor people, the sweepers and labourers will stop working for one day it will create a panic in the town. To him, you should not believe the so-called wealthy people because they are more dead than alive. He said that the masses who are starving, destitute & downtrodden must be made educated and their conditions must improve in order to give them back their lost individuality. These ordinary people have suffered oppression for thousands of years. They suffered it without objection and as a result they have got superb strength of mind. They have suffered immortal hardships, which has given them stubborn energy. Their suffering is due to the money-owning upper classes of India and by this way they have been deprived of their individuality and human dignity. He had argument with one Professor of Philosophy from Banaras who argued 'poverty' as '*Maya*' (illusion). In reply Vivekananda strongly contained that you cannot preach religion to hungry people and considered poverty as the greatest sin. He argued one of the major causes of our downfall is neglecting the masses. So reprimanding the upper classes he said, "In this world of *Maya*, you are the real illusions, the mystery, and the real mirage in the desert". That's why he called on the reformers that instead of thinking so much regarding idol worship, widow remarriage, they should think more to ameliorate the poor, the destitute & the downtrodden. To ameliorate the miseries of the downtrodden he

called for undertaking the responsibility of constructive programmes and helping the destitute.

Society Free of Superstitions

Vivekananda was against religion based on dogmas and blind beliefs. As a rational and scientific thinker, he called upon the mankind to shun superstitions and fight against the authority of such a society. He said, to follow the society and public opinion blindly will be idolatry. As a believer of the scientific inquiry and investigations, he said the methods of investigation which are applied to science should also be applied to the science of religion. This kind of investigation will make the religion permanent & useful. Secondly, he said this process of investigation will not only make the religion as scientific as some of the conclusions of Physics or Chemistry, but will have greater potency because physics, chemistry has no inner mandate to guarantee for its truth. But the religion has the most energetic internal force. Thus, he said individual has every right to apply his reason, to know the truth and then accept the order of the day. He further said the concepts of *adhikarvad*, untouchability, suppression of women rights is all against the prescription of a civilized society and even against the real teachings of religions. It is because of the blind beliefs and superstitious practices there is war and bloodshed every time and in every society. Such a society should be remodelled in accordance with reasons and rationality. That's why man should come up, apply his rationality and break the law of the society which are based on orthodoxy and dogmatism.

His Perception of Religion as Universal One

Vivekananda strongly believed in unity among different religious belief systems. In the world

Parliament of religion at Chicago he emphasised on the fundamental unity of all religions by denouncing any tendency of emphasising the greatness of one's own religion and disapproving other religions faiths which he argued as a clear negation to the harmony of religious unity. He appealed to the followers of different religions to be true to their fundamental tenets. "The Christian has not to become Hindu or Buddhist, nor a Hindu or Buddhist to become Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the other, and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth... anybody dreams of exclusive survival of his own religion and destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart" (Sengupta, 1993, p. 16). And "If you are born a Christian be a good Christian, if you are born a Hindu, be a good Hindu. If you are born a Muslim be a good Muslim". The keynote of his address was universal tolerance and acceptance of all religions. Swamiji condemned the narrow, limited and fighting ideas of different religions. He said it is merely superstitious to believe that each nation or tribe should have its own particular god who is always right and others are wrong. It is because of such superstitions; religion has created most ferocious hatred and bitter enmity between man and man. It has created war and disharmony in the world. But that is not true religion. True religion should be based on investigation & realization of truth.

Swamiji said there may be different religions in the world but the essence of all the religions is the same. Being influenced by the *Vedantic* philosophy he believed in the concept of *Advaita* (monism) - God is one - we all belong to different groups and sects - but have the same objective i.e., the realization of God. Hence it is better to have one universal religion in the world so that religious

harmony can be possible. Thus, his universal religion is the synthesis of the ideals of all the religions. Universal religion is the thread that runs through all the pearls & each pearl is a religion or even a sect thereof, it means universal religion does not mean the end of religious variations. It is simply based on the realization that God is the centre of all religions and that each of us is moving towards Him. Hence, he said that we have to “‘help & not fight’, ‘assimilate & not destruct’, ‘create harmony & peace & not dissension’”. Universal religion will pave the way for internationalism. Thus, he talked of universal religion to be the basis of new world order. If any faith in the world teaches fundamentalism then it is not a religion, but it is a gravest crime against humanity. Swamiji stated that, “‘We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the *Vedas*, nor the Bible, nor the Quran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the *Vedas*, Bible and the Quran” (Mukherji, 2012, p. 26).

His Concept of Internationalism and Bonding of World Unity

The ideal for universal brotherhood is not a new concept and had been pondered over by many before Vivekananda. But any attempt for the same without spirituality had been self-defeating. According to Vivekananda, there is only oneself in the universe, only one existence. When it manifests through time, space and causation, it appears to be diverse and is called by different names. Difference of views and thinking are deeply rooted in the scheme of the universe. Truth can be seen from many angles and expressed in diverse ways. We must accept this basic truth. In the heart of all things, there is a fundamental unity. When all life in the whole universe is seen in vast oneness, the self-centredness, narrow-mindedness, and countless

divisions immediately collapse (Kundu, 2018, p. 14). To him the unity of all beings has to be realised through unconditional love for all, wise detachment and extension of self through service of humanity beyond dogmas and sectarian faiths. Thus, Swamiji believed in the universal brotherhood of man and nations. He was also a champion of equality and mutual cooperation among the nations. But he said, though everyone is talking about it, nobody is serious about it. Rather day-by-day different religious sects are coming up which are creating religious acrimony and destroying universal brotherhood. His address ‘my dear brothers & sisters of America’ at the Chicago meeting made American audience deeply moved. He wanted to establish universal brotherhood through religious harmony and cultural exchange. He also suggested that the rich nations should come to the rescue of poor nations. Then only international amity will be a reality.

World Unity in the Midst of National Diversities

Vivekanand said unity in diversity is the plan of the universe. We are all a constituent of the humanity but as individual we are different from one another. As a man one is separate from the woman; as a human being a man is one with woman. So also families, tribes, races and nations have distinct identity but at the same time they are a part of the entire international society. Thus, he said, “‘out of diversities we are all going towards this universal existence such as families into tribes, tribes into races, races into nations, and nations into humanity”’. (Vivekanand, 2014, p. 138) As a committed believer of world unity, he said, unity is knowledge, diversity is ignorance. Therefore, the world unity will emerge out of acquiring the real knowledge. As a true internationalist who in his vision of an inter-dependent mutually cooperative

world was far ahead of his time. Moreover, as a true democrat Swamiji believed in the equality among nations. He opposed the British rule in India. He never favoured war and conquest. He said India is the only country that never went outside of itself to conquer other countries. Even the great conqueror Ashoka insisted that none of his descendants should go to conquer.

Harmonious Balance between Spiritualistic and Materialistic Society

During his second visit to the West, Vivekananda's international perception took another orientation. He developed a conviction that the East and West ought to be mutually helpful and must cooperate with each other. He was neither overwhelmed by material brilliance of the west nor could he emphasise on the spirituality of India hiding her social and economic drawbacks. He said to sister Nivedita "the West had tried to conquer external nature, and the East had tried to conquer internal nature. New East & the West must work hand in hand for the good of each other without destroying the special characteristics of each". He warns India if it is to live as a nation its people must learn mechanism, the science of physical nature, the organisation and art of government from the West and yet preserve spirituality as the central theme of life. And what the West should learn from East particularly India is its great spiritual truths which have been enumerated in the *Vedanta*. To him, no nation becomes great just by making material progress and enacting good laws. So, the West has much to learn from the East and the East has much to learn from the West. In fact, the future has to be shaped by a proper blending of the two ideals. Then there will be neither East nor West, but one humanity. The principle is that nations and individuals prosper by a system of "give and take".

If truth be told, in an age when the prevailing perception of India was that of a perpetual receiver of Western enlightenment, the Swami was firm in his conviction that "the East must come to the West, not as a sycophant, not as a servant, but as *Guru* and teacher (Ganguly, 2016, p. 9). Thus, Swami admits the need of both spiritualistic and materialistic-based society.

His Social Philosophy and Inclusive Society

Swamiji supported the *Varna* system as advocated by the *Veda* & hence was not opposed to caste system as such. What he was opposed to was the perversion and immobility of the caste system. He said "while caste system divided the people it also united them because all the members of a caste were bound to help their fellows in case of need. And as no man could rise out of his caste, the Hindus have no such struggles for social and personal supremacy as embitter the people of others countries". But the worst part of the caste system is its strict compartmentalization - discouraging competition and the checking of competition led to loss of self-confidence which finally resulted in the political downfall of India and its conquest by foreign races. He condemned the orthodox *Brahminical* doctrine of *Adhikaravada*. According to this doctrine, the *Sudras* or the masses were excluded from the right to read the *Veda*. He said, nowhere the Hindu scriptures favoured untouchability. Swamiji was a *Vedantic* spiritualist who believed that once *Vedantic* religion is followed, Hinduism will come to its true form & every individual will have his proper place as part of the divinity. Hence, he was rather very much concerned for the poorest of the poor, for the neglected and for the upliftment of the downtrodden. Like a socialist he believed that an age will come when the *Sudras* (lower castes) will

take over not remaining as the *Sudras* but as new types of human beings equal to all others in the society. This also involved the upper castes giving up all their special privileges and accepting equal status in the society. In other words, in the ideal society there will be existed only one caste and the lower strata will be raised to the level of the higher ones. It means that all the social distinctions will be doused in so far as all the people will be elevated to the level of *Brahmins* as it was the case in the *Satyayuga*. Thus, Swamiji's approach to caste was moderate & humanistic rather than revolutionary or iconoclastic.

Women Emancipation and Liberation

Swamiji gave much importance to women. He said, "With five hundred motivated men it will take me fifty years to transform India. With fifty motivated women, it may take only a few years" (Sengupta, 1993, pp. 17-18). He said woman is the mother-god. She is the *Shakti*. Hence, she should be treated equally and should be educated equally like men. He quoted Manu and said, 'God resides in those families where women are happy and well-treated'. According to him, the Americans are so prosperous, learned, so free and so energetic because the men treat their women in the same manner as they would have been treated. But Indians continue to be slavish, miserable and dead, because they do not give right attention to the women folk. To him, the ideal woman in India is the mother, the mother first and the mother last. The woman calls up to the mind of the Hindu, motherhood and God is called mother. The woman should not be used simply as wife as in the West. The idea of womanhood is concentrated on the concept of women as a wife. But to the mind of ordinary man in India, the whole force of womanhood is concentrated in motherhood. In the Western home the wife rules,

and in an Indian home the mother rules (Sivaramkrishna, 2012, p. 276). Besides he opined that they should not get married at a tender age. Proper training should be given to them so that they could learn about the significance of renunciation and this would certainly help them in practising virginity throughout their life. Along with this, they should be taught sciences and other things, which would be of benefit not only to them but to others as well. He said it was a strange fact that when Oxford & Cambridge were closed to women at that time Calcutta University opened its door for women more than 20 years ago. But at a later period due to fall in the general education for all, women education was also uncared for. Vivekananda said, so long a nation continues to neglect its women it cannot go up and continue to suffer. Thus he wanted the ancient Indian conditions to be reinstated under which women were behaved with respect and admired as companions and equal partners of men.

Education for Man Making and Character Building

A sound education system is the prerequisite of an ideal society. For Vivekananda education in order to be meaningful must be backed by character. According to him "Education is hardly edifying without provision for character. Character transmission is the essential mission of education. Those who give their children everything in the world, but fail to give character, give them, 'stone' in place of 'bread' (Budhananda, 2013, p. 8). He advocated education for the masses without which he meant the development would not be propagated and the people will continue to be backward. He said that education of today is based on wrong methods. According to him, education should help the common mass of people to equal themselves

for the struggle of life, strengthen the character of man, spirit of philanthropy & courage. He said, "If the poor cannot come to education, education must reach to them at the plough, in the factory, everywhere." He wanted to excel the process of development through the mass education. Vivekananda believed that in this modern world the melody of fraternity i.e. the universal brotherhood can be achieved only through the imparting of proper education. He also advocated for the kind of education which is related with good culture and is scientific in nature. He said, "Teach the masses in the vernaculars, give them ideas; they will get information, but something more is necessary give them culture. Until you give them that, there can be no permanence in the raised condition of the masses" (Dey, 2012, p. 58). Thus in Swamiji's view, the education should be scientific, cosmopolitan, spiritual & scholarly. It also should have secular outlook and should be a man of character. It should help individual in his inward development.

Swamiji once expressed his plan of setting up a women's *Matha* for the training of worthy unmarried girls and widows for educating the women of India and equip them to rise from the deplorable condition in orthodox Hindu society. Swamiji also insisted that given the superior aptitude for learning among *Brahmins* than among *Pariahs*, no money should be spent any more for the education of the *Brahmins*, so as to have adequate resources for raising the *Pariahs* to the level of *Brahmins*. This has to be done by the *Brahmins* themselves because it is the duty of every upper class to build a platform for others (Rustau, 1998, p. 274).

His Concept of Nationalism: Worshiping the

Nation and Its Masses

The concept of nationalism occupies a pivot position in his entire philosophical outlook. His sort of nationalism requires commitment, dedication and sacrifice by its people towards the nation. He put the nation at high esteem and he almost rediscovered India emaciating as a result of centuries old oppression and ignorance. He was not swayed away by the emotional aspect of nationalism rather his approach was more rational and concrete. He called upon the youth force to arise and awake and to serve the motherland. He had a clarion call to each youth within whom he finds an eternal power being lodged in, through which they can revive the whole of India (2013, p. 1). Swamiji was a great votary of the concept of nation. For him, the nation and its masses are the real god to be worshipped. He believed the nation is the god manifested. So, after returning from America he decided to work for the regeneration of nationalist feeling and to wipe-out tears from the eyes of starving million. Quoting about Vivekananda Romain Rolland writes that "For the next 50 years... let all other vains of gods disappear from the time from our minds. This is the only god that is awake, our own race everywhere his hand, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears. He covers everything. All other gods are sleeping...The first of all worship is this worship of the *virat*...of those all rounds us. These are all our Gods-men and animals & the first God we have to worship is our own countrymen". He called upon the youth of India to construct their own character and worship their motherland as a spiritual entity. Thus the uplift and worship of India was Swamiji life's intrinsic and essential message. Correspondingly, Swamiji gave importance to man and his individual existence and potentiality. To him, a human being is the greatest creation in the entire universe. Human life is most precious & valuable. Man is superior to all

other being on earth. To quote him “Man is higher than all animals, than all angels, none is greater than man”. Man is the living god to be worshipped is the human being. Man should be psychologically, bodily & practically strong.

Development of the Masses

According to Vivekananda, the nation lives in the cottage. If the big chunks of Indian masses continued to remain poor, uneducated, oppressed & miserable, social reforms like abolition of untouchability, *Sati* system or introducing widow remarriage would not make a strong impact in India. To him, as the education and the wealth of the rich is probable due to the sacrifice of the toiling masses and it is the duty of the former to take care of the latter. All the members of the society should have the same opportunities to acquire education, wealth, and so on. “A new India will emerge out of peasants’ cottage, out of the huts of fisherman, the cobbler & the sweeper. Let her originate from the factory, from the marts and markets”. Thus he called on the people of India to awake, renunciate & serve.

Conclusion

Analysing the philosophical discourses of Vivekananda, it lands us in conclusion that despite some sections of intellectuals criticising him as a militant nationalist and revivalist his thought moved always in higher spiritual plain which observed him from the charge of narrowness. His harmonisation of religion with nationalism and that of humanism is distinct of his unique philosophical outlook. In his concept of ideal society, we find no existence of any space for privileges of force, wealth, intelligence, birth or spirituality. All the privileges have to be overcome and that’s why he criticised the Indian

Brahmins for their griping to these privileges. To him, the one who is not ready to give liberty to others does not deserve liberty for himself.

While describing for harmony of religions, he stood for divinity of humankind. Thus, he believed in the equality of all religions. According to him, every religion has a soul of its own and may differ from the souls of other religions. But they are not contradictory. Their essences are the same. To him, the slogan should be religious acceptance and not toleration. Toleration comes out of a superiority complex.

He also criticised the system of inequality created within a religion in the name of caste, untouchability, apartheid, and gender discrimination. (Mohanty, 2007, pp. 128-129) Suitably Swamiji’s mission was to make the existing religions scientific, rational, human & universal. For him, the spiritual process can be practised in non-religious mode as well; but it would be useful to extract the essence of existing religions to benefit in that way. For Swamiji, the external rituals of religions are of secondary importance, but the spiritual essence of religions needs to be accepted. If we seek a universal religion which can be followed by everyone it must include all degrees of religious development.

Emphasising on each soul as potentially divine he reiterated that the key purpose of our life is to realise the same through the path of selfless service to humanity, assimilation of wisdom through deeper introspection, dedication to any concept of the Almighty or some special psychophysical practice. Subscribing education as a basic of positive idea he said, “If you can give them positive

ideas, the people will grow up to be men and learn to stand on their own legs.” This is the significance of Swamiji’s idea of mass education which he meant is immediately needed for total development. His philosophical doctrinaire went on to emphasise the vast multitude of poor masses of India, and their upliftment, without which the development of the nation would be a distant reality.

According to Swamiji, the caste is basically in the nature of an organism. In social organism no vocation should be regarded as superior to another. In Swamiji’s words, “I can perform one duty in social life, and you can perform another; you can govern a country, and I can mend a pair of shoes, but that is no reason why you are greater than I, for can you mend my shoes? Can I govern the country? I am clever in mending shoes, you are clever in reading the *Vedas*, but that is no reason why you should trample on my head”. The perversion of caste system was taking place in the processes of social evolution. Hence caste is good but what bad is the feeling of inequality arising from wrong social evaluation. It may be considered as degeneration of an ideal. It hinders the individual freedom and social unity. So his call for regeneration of this ideal i.e. the caste system is to serve the social end (Sarasvati, pp. 96-97). If Vivekananda were alive today, he would have wept at the animosity and hatred being perpetuated amongst various peoples.

His call to the youth of the country to fight for the upliftment of the downtrodden, his revolutionary approach to the problem of liquidating the privileges of the rich and giving the toilers their due, his crusade against untouchability are very significant in the years to come. Thus, an ideal form of society is one where the highest truth can be

held, practised and lived by all. The ideal society would be the one in which there would be the synthesis of the Indian idea of spiritual integrity and the western idea of social progress. To sum up it is the unique blend of religion and science that regenerated the virtuous aspect of Hindu philosophy and its reach potentiality to serve the humanity accounted Vivekananda as a greatest man, the humanity has ever produced.

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