



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AS A SPIRITUAL VOICE PRONOUNCING THE LIBERAL MESSAGE OF VEDANTA AS THE UNDERLYING UNITY ON THE MAGNIFICENT PEDESTAL OF ALL UNIVERSAL RELIGION: AN APPRAISAL

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ABSTRACT

This paper purports to project Swami Vivekananda as a great luminary and a Spiritually well-developed man of multi- faceted personality, gifted with good heart, sound health, healthy brain, profound love, deep feeling and spiritual fire coupled with apostolic eloquence and mild attitude rounded up in one as an eloquent expression for the spirit of physical and spiritual powers in and through all the aspects of life. It also reveals how dynamism and activism have served as two eyes of his magnetic personality, showering a spiritual voice pronouncing the liberal message of Vedanta as the underlying unity on the magnificent pedestal of all Universal religion, both at home and abroad.

Keywords: *great luminary, multi- faceted personality, spiritual voice, liberal, message, profound love pedestal , universal religion, unity.*

INTRODUCTION

Swami Vivekananda, a great luminary, was a physically well-built and spiritually well-developed man of multiple personality. His heart, health, brain, love and spiritual fire, apostolic eloquence and mild attitude – all these forces harmoniously contained in him and combined they can hardly miss an eloquent expression of the spirit of physical and spiritual powers in and through all the aspects of his life. Dynamism during lifetime and diffusion thereafter with the rapidly of a forest fire has been the essential characteristics of his personality both home and abroad. His rousing and fiery words coloured with Hindu mythologies are still inspiring many devotees and others both in the East and the West:

“From dreams awake, from bonds be free

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*Be not afraid. This mystery,
My shadow, cannot frighten me,
Know once for all that I am He.” (P 128).*

and

“Arise! Awake! And Stop not till the goal is not reached”. His aim was truly to serve the humanity. This is why, at the clarion call of this heroic monk, the slumbering soul of India was stirred to its inmost depth and it expressed itself in a magnificent variety of creative activity. His discourses and writings, as published under the title *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* are still stirring and inspiring the hearts and minds of the people of the world. “Swami Vivekananda’s relevance depends not on the nature of the problems we face but on the spirit with which those problems have to be tackled. His stress was on man himself, for, given the right kind of man, no problem need be daunting. Man-making is my mission he used to say. Indeed, a country’s future depends upon its people – how good, intelligent and capable they are” (Lokeswarananda 1).

Such a great personality of Swami Vivekananda has left remarkable footmarks on the sand of time. These footmarks of his have been traced with great enthusiasm and respect all over the world. It is therefore that he stands in the list of twenty makers of modern America. He is the one who is said to have analysed the deeper aspirations of the human heart, and scanned its doubts and confusions by the studying the entire course of human progress through centuries, comparing different epochs of cultural advance and weighing the various ideas of human civilization and from all these data, he discovered and pointed out to humanity the path that might lead it to a glorious future. He was the spiritual seer pouring out his heart and the surging stream of spirituality, of endless love for God and deified humanity, of universal faith in all religions – the stream that had its birth on the snow capped heights of heavenly life of Sri Ramakrishna. By his magnificent oratory and spiritual power, Swami Vivekananda did acquaint the world with the lofty ideas and ideals connected with various aspects of Hinduism, and also with his central theme of universality of religions based on the findings of the Vedic seers. By his rational exposition, he show how the Hindu view of religion could stand the severest scrutiny of reason and exist in perfect amity with the findings of science. Above all he laid emphasis on the fact that the broad and liberal message of Vedanta contained the science of all religions that might enable the world to stand united on the magnificent pedestal of all universal religion. Praising Vivekananda’s vigour of spirituality and personality, Arun Bhattacharjee writes:

*“His greatness lies in the fact that in the
nineteenth century when India was considered
a backward country which had everything
to learn from Europe, he proved to the world
that India had a great religion and
culture which Europe should learn” (P 131).*

Swami Vivekananda considered religion as “the manifestation of the divinity that is already in man”. Since realization is the core of all religions, the individual of any religion or sect may find God. This



view does express the equality of religions. This manifestation of Swami Vivekananda was inspired by his own realization and his theory of practical Vedanta.

Such a great personality was born as child Narendranath, or simply Naren – as he was called in his pre-monastic days, in the famous Datta family of Simila in the northern part of Calcutta on Monday, 12th January 1863. Both of Naren’s parents, Vishwanath Datta and Bhuvanewari Devi, were unusually gifted with the admirable qualities such as exceptional intelligence and compassion for the unfortunate. His mother knew by memory long passages from Hindu scriptures, and it was from her that he first heard the great religious epics of India. “It was at her knee”, wrote His Eastern and Western Disciple, “that he first heard the tales of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and no doubt, Naren’s education began at the knee of his mother from whom he learnt the Bengali alphabets, the first English words, the romantic tales of the *Ramayana*. Inspired by religious episodes, he once meditated in a room of his house with so much of rapt attention that the door of the room had to be broken to awaken him. Thus, yogic consciousness was evident for him from the very beginning. These extraordinary powers and the inborn religious instinct so spontaneously manifested in a sparkling variety of forms even in childhood, gave faint but sure indications of what a great spiritual destiny was in store for him in future. As years rolled on, at the age of six, Naren started going to school within a year, he memorized almost the whole of the *Mugdhbodha*, a Sanskrit Grammar as passages of great length from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In 1871, he was admitted to the metropolitan Institution founded by Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. Teachers and classmates at once recognized his exceptional intelligence. One could see him as a student intensely intellectual. At the college stage, he had achieved an intimate knowledge of English literature, European history, philosophy, science, art, music and even medicine. Being a staunch supporter of social reform, he was vehemently against superstitions. In the words of P.S.Sastri,

“Swami Vivekananda’s lectures, letters and writings reveal not the dry intellect of a thinker, but the outpourings of a heart, the spontaneous outburst of a heart deeply stirred” (P 294).

His aim was to stir the human heart and awaken mankind from the deep slumber to spiritualism. He proclaimed the fact that the present age requires new modes of thought and new life” (P 129). In fact, to think about such an inspiring person as Swami Vivekananda, fills everyone with a new spirit and consciousness. He practiced spiritual exercises and as a result experience a kind of Bliss which he wanted everyone to experience. It should be added that Swami Vivekananda never propounded any new philosophy; nor did he try to impose his philosophy on others. “Tapash Sankar Dutta remarks:

“Swamiji revived that old spirit, recast and recommended it to make it more relevant to the modern world – full of complexities and contradictions” (P 265).



He wanted each individual to realise the one Reality, both within as the immeasurable self and without as the divine oneness of all life". India, from time immemorial, has been a source of great spiritual power and thought. It was natural for a person like Swami Vivekananda to experience certain Indian spiritual ideals and endeavour to make them comprehensible to the common man. It was made clear that his thoughts were born out of his personal experiences and the speeches of Swami Vivekananda were extempore. Whenever he spoke, his voice electrified the audience, for "He had a dynamic dominating and magnetic personality. The charm and power of his eloquence captivated all" (Jagtiani 5). He proved that he could convey to the audience any abstract idea in a lucid and simple way. T.Muttucumaru holds:

"He who has realised the Atman becomes a storehouse of great power. From him as the centre, a spiritual force emanates, working within certain radius. People who come within this circle become inspired with his ideas and are over whelmed by them" (P 138).

There was tremendous force in the personality of Swami Vivekananda. It was his force of body from morning to night, travelling from East to West, serving humanity inexhaustibly, and when it mingled with his spiritual power, he helmed proudly before the world Religious Fair 1893, dawned the Sun of Hinduism on the Snow capped land, restored India's past glory and its motherland in religion, aired Vedanta philosophy for the upliftment of human beings, infused the feelings of patriotism among the native and above all pumped up the theme of universality to the world. He was really "a Great Patriot-Saint, a divinely inspired and God appointed leader, who opened the eyes of the world to a new vista of thought and planted firmly the living seed of spirituality in the souls of the people, not only for men in India, but also for the whole of Humanity," (Chauhan 133). In the Chicago Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda made a great impact upon the delegates of his eloquent speeches there. He uttered his philosophy thus:

"As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to thee" (135).

His very first speech drew admiration of the people and his message was well received by them. O.P.Sharma rightly remarks:

"His speech had profound impact on American audiences because it filled the immense void in the spiritual life of the west caused by militant rationalism and irreverent scientific

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spirit” (135).

The speeches delivered at America made him famous not only in the United States but all over the world and on his return to India, he gave inspiring messages to the people for their spiritual and social upliftment. His noble and lofty words created a new chord in every Hindu heart and infused a sense of pride and self-esteem as well as an ardent love for the motherland in the minds of the people. They began to adore their motherland with a new vigour as a deity and nationalism became a religion to them. He revived Hindu spiritualism and established its superiority over Islam and Christianity. He made the Hindus realise the degraded position to which they had fallen and inspired them to regain their past glory. He suggested to the Hindus that if they would pursue the path as shown by the Vedanta, they would realize the soul of their religion and be able to build a glorious society and nation once more. He gave the message of Hindu spiritualism to the people in the West as well which established not only its superiority there but also made the Hindus self-confident of their religion and culture.

It is universally understood and accepted that Swami Vivekananda raised the status of religion and spiritualism among the people of the entire world. He believed in the fundamental unity of all religions. He, therefore, preached tolerance, equality and cooperation among people of all faiths. Service to humanity played a very important role in the teaching of Swami Vivekananda. He regarded education, emancipation of women and removal of poverty as absolute necessities for pursuing religion. “Swami Vivekananda”, as O.P.Sharma regards, “was a pragmatic spiritualist He did not believe in preaching hollow sermons to penury stricken people. He firmly held the view that happiness is not possible without economic progress”. He also believed that spiritual progress would lead to self-realization of individuals and that would lead to social and national uplift automatically. The way in which he exhorted and established the superiority of Hindu religion and spiritualism, certainly provided confidence, self-glorification and patriotism among the Hindus and that helped in the nation building. He is said to have helped surely in strengthening the national sentiments and inspired many Indian political leaders take Mahatma Gandhi, Subash Chandra Bose, Balgangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Jawaharlal Nehru etc. Remembering Swami Vivekananda’s contribution, Jawaharlal Nehru once said,

“He was no politician in the ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great founders... of the national modern movement of India and a great number of people who took more or less in active part in the movement in a later date drew their inspiration from Swami Vivekananda” (136).

Rather undoubtedly, Vivekananda was one of the great patriot sons of India of his time and even of all times to come. In spite of being very catholic, tolerant and widely travelled, he was proud of India and her great culture. He had great faith in the future role of India in the world. Spirituality is the



characteristic of Indian culture that is her gift to the world. Besides spirituality, the world has to learn sympathy, tolerance and other human virtues from this country. While praising India, Vivekananda used such sentimental language and inspiring words that he was known as the very embodiment of emotional patriotism.

By infusing a new dynamism into ancient Indian spiritualism, Swami Vivekananda longed for communal harmony and reintegration of world society. An integrated harmonious development of human being was the aim of Swami Vivekananda and hence his sincere efforts in this context are commendable. By resorting to total renunciation as a Sanyasin, he took pains to raise humanity from the crippled social order. It remain in investigating further how his dream could be made a reality. Swami Vivekananda lived a spiritual life devoted to the service of all human beings. “Generations to come will remember this gem of a man who was an epitome of universal brotherhood, renunciation, patriotism, self-abnegation and who had the will to dare or die” (Nivedita 241).

To conclude, Swami Vivekananda may be considered as one of the powerful spiritualists India has ever given to the world. He longed to build the human beings of all nations with spirituality. He was not an Indian but a universal prophet. He is the spiritual seer who dreamed of a universal religion holding together all the truths of all religions.

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