

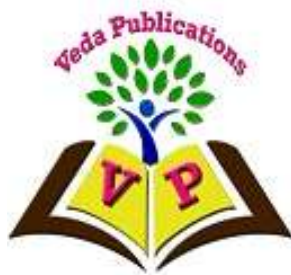


SOCIO-CULTURAL AND LITERARY VISION OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: A CRITICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT



In this Research Paper the researchers would like to present the gist of Swami Vivekananda's views expressed in the lectures from *Colombo to Almora* on the topics like Women Empowerment, Awakening of India, Education, Neo-Vedanta, Message to the Youth. Swami Vivekananda had enviable command on English language which had been the dress of his powerful thoughts and feeling for the elevation of humanity. His English is clear, spontaneous, lucid, eloquent and rhythmic. His rational mind not only separated true religious ideals from the heap of superstitious dogmas and brought down the Philosophy of Vedanta from the exclusive possession of a few to the reach of the common man. Being a staunch humanist, he always stood for the poor and the exploited.

Keywords: *Women Empowerment- Awakening of India- Education- Neo-Vedanta*



Swami Vivekananda, an impressive gifted orator, one of the foremost thinkers of the world, the greatest mystic of his times, the greatest interpreter of the sublime ideas of the Vedanta philosophy, the ablest champion of the Practical Vedanta and a spiritual humanist wrote on a variety of subjects – spirituality, religion, condition of the downtrodden, poverty. He occupies a unique position in the history of Indian English Prose as a writer of prose of social thought and spirituality. His works – speeches and lectures delivered in India and abroad, interviews, talks, discussions and articles to magazines – extend to as many as nine volumes which were published by the Advaita Ashrama. Whatever Swami Vivekananda pronounced is endowed with sincerity, uncommon force, deep emotion and warmth of feeling. The thoughts that he present in his works reveal his convincing manner, his logical and rational power, his impressive nature, his imaginative and creative faculty.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Early feminism saw the subordinate status assigned to woman in an essentially patriarchal culture, where woman was an inferior race meant only for procreation and by implication domesticity. Vivekananda asserted that women have a great capacity for knowledge and devotion. If ideal women like Maitreyi and Gargi existed in ancient India he argues why the women cannot have the same status and privilege in the present. Vivekananda was vehement in his denunciation of a race where women were not respected. For him, It was the women's constructive energy which made the family and its greatness lies in the *tapasya* of the women. In 1901 Vivekananda spoke of a *Math* for women to produce great women like Gargis and Maitreyis. This concept was revolutionary one and shows his concerns for women and their equal importance in the history of mankind. Vivekananda's idea was to establish an exclusive centre where they will not only gain knowledge both secular and spiritual but would also be trained in practical matters. Most importantly, the cardinal principle was that men were to have no business with this *Math*. The ideas of Swami Vivekananda were not to destroy the fabric of the society but to strengthen it by removing the

weaker threads. He tried to synthesis the woman self with society as a whole. He made no distinction of gender. He said that when the mind becomes introspective, the idea of difference vanishes. This concept of Vivekananda may be supposed to be corrective to the radical feminism of today. Women in India in spite of their cloistered seclusion had risen to power. Women in the West may thirst for glory of love or the power of wealth. For the Indian woman it must be through the intensifying of the Indian ideal of unselfishness and wisdom and social power that emancipation shall come.

WAKENING OF INDIA

Swami Vivekananda was a positive and affirmative personality, which negated none but occupied all within its fold. He put forward the ideas of a nation, which should have the best of knowledge, highest of values, flowing wealth and pleasure in society. In a nation, the *Brahmins* (the learned) should be respected, the *Kshatriya* (brave) honoured, the *Vaishyas* (commercial people) should have distributive spirit and the society will be able to enjoy to its full capacity when the *shudras* (labourer) have the equality and dignity of labour. No doubt, Swami Vivekananda preferred socialism on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread. He was not totally against capitalism. Vivekananda was in favour of small-scale farming by peasant-proprietors and small-scale agro-based enterprises, clothing the whole countryside as against large-scale capital-intensive projects. He also recommended that India should take active steps to export her goods; especially surplus goods all over the world and recommended the opening of overseas trade offices.

Swami Vivekananda wanted to quip socialism with spirituality. In this context, he was not contrary to Karl Marx who gave no importance to religion, but complementary to Marxian philosophy in which human definitely holds the utmost value. Swami Vivekananda neither ridiculed the role of workers' association or groups as Rousseau did by declaring them as worms in the entrails of body politic, better to be destroyed for the welfare of the society nor countered like pluralists who saw the state too as an association having a definite end. Swami Vivekananda believed that the well being of a nation depends upon the character of individual



members. If people have high morality, the nation well reflects that. Swami Vivekananda was the first modern thinker who asked the Indians to see God in human beings and coined the word "*Daidra-Narayan*". Mahatma Gandhi later on based his philosophy of '*Harijan*' on this term linking it to the root and branch reform and the path shown by Swami Vivekananda. He was aware of life's tenable realities.

Swami Vivekananda did not give any 'package reform programme' for India. He wanted people to be enlightened and roused through proper education, secular and spiritual, formal and informal, about their divine potentiality, power and possibilities, which would enable them to find solutions to their pressing problems by themselves. According to Swami Vivekananda, the education system prevalent under the British rule was not fit for the development of India as it was eroding the national pride and self-confidence. He did not like the class confines within which education largely functioned, leaving out of its sphere the masses, who so badly needed education for lifting themselves up from the centuries of morass of poverty, ignorance and humiliation.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

He favoured the education system on national lines, both secular and spiritual. The most important aim of education should be to make the young students fearless because fear is the greatest enemy of self-development. What we now talk about as audio-visual education and non-formal education was conceived by Vivekananda more than hundred years ago. Today we are still facing the bitter experience of school drop outs and illiteracy, regarding which Vivekananda warned and opined that the education should be at the door steps of the people, especially the poor one and according to their requirements. As we see the danger of brain drain, the words of Swami Vivekananda sound echoes that the education should instill faith among the youth of the nation for its regeneration. He advocated man-making education for the youth and wished that such educated people use their education to make men out of others. Use of the intellect rather than accumulation of knowledge, concentration rather than cramming, total human

development, inculcating the spirit of '*abhay*', love for the fellow beings, rationality instead of superstitions along with the *Vedantic* philosophy of divinity of man and universal brotherhood is the message that Swami Vivekananda gave to both the students and teachers. Now India in 2011 has responded to this need of the nation by enacting such a law in the Parliament as 'Right to Education'. It is the most important tool to arouse the consciousness among the minds of the common people. The true education shall awaken among the masses a conscious love of people and country. National existence depends upon its capacity of producing great men out of the rank and file. New problems would arise, requiring new solutions. It can be possible only if the education system is on the nationalistic lines with broader *Vedantic* outlook.

MESSAGE TO THE YOUTH

Vivekananda had tremendous faith in the young people of our country. If the country is to become powerful and prosperous, the youth will have to come forward. The energies of the youth should be directed through a concrete program to make their life more meaningful for them as well as for the nation. Youth must be trained to develop a discriminating mind to decide between right and wrong, moral and immoral. He asked the people of the country to have a mission in their lives. They must have the feeling of pride and honour of belonging to this nation and then with a sense of duty and obligation, they must work for its welfare. According to Swami Vivekananda, every work should be done with national vision and enthusiasm, and spirit of joy. A study becomes more efficient when one keeps right before one's mind the individual and social objectives of the study. The carpenter, the stone-cutter, the shoe maker, the student, the teacher, the administrator, the industrial executive, the house wife-each and all in the nation can become energized by this one thought that he is primarily a citizen of India and that the work that he does has got a tremendous human and national relevance.

VIVEKANANDA'S NEO-VEDANTA

In the Parliament of Religions, Vivekananda established the supremacy of Indian thought and continuity in it. When Christian missionaries were spreading their gospel and promoting conversions,



he attacked Christianity as a patchy imitation of Hinduism. At the same time, he cautioned the Indians of getting their religion into the kitchen. However, the very idea of naming and defining Hinduism was possible, only after his famous oration at the Chicago Parliament of Religions was accepted by the whole of world, particularly India. It was the religious consciousness of India, the message of its people as determined by their whole past, which spoke through him. According to Vivekananda, from the high spiritual flights of *Vedanta* philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the lowest side of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists, and asceticism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hinduism. Swami Vivekananda's address in the World Parliament of Religions was the seed sown on that day for the future freedom movement and independence.

Swami Vivekananda was a rare combination of *sannyasin* and householder. No doubt, he was imbued with the spirit of renunciation. The same destiny also filled him with the spirit of ideal householder, full of the yearning to protect and save, eager to learn and teach the use of materials, reaching out towards the reorganization and re-ordering of life. For him, there was no distinction henceforth between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray, to conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid. This is the realization, which made Vivekananda the great preacher of *Karma*, as expressing *Jnana* and *Bhakti*. To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field were as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man, as the cell of the worm or the door of the temple.

CONCLUSION

Vivekananda's mind was as vast as ocean and as high as sky. He was one such genius who combined in himself a beautiful synthesis of science and spirituality, action and devotion, militancy and self-denying love. He was a lion among men whose ideas still lives in the soul of his mother India and in the soul of her children. Vivekananda had kindness in his hands, confidence in his chest, truth on his tongue and holiness in his heart. The researcher confines himself to the analysis of the above mentioned five

themes only in this paper. There are so many themes and progressive ideas one can find from the works of Swami Vivekananda and there is a lot of scope to do future research on the other themes such as "Socio and Economic Vision of Swami Vivekananda", "Integration of Science and Religion in the Teachings of Swami Vivekananda", "The Concept of Universal Religion of Swami Vivekananda", "from the other lectures of Swami Vivekananda along with his letters which were written by him to his disciples.

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