



THE CONCEPT OF PRACTICAL VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

Mithun Chandra Sarkar

Ph.D. Research Scholar

Department of Political Science, Raiganj University
Uttar Dinajpur, West Bengal

Abstract

Swami Vivekananda was a spiritual teacher, a monk, and a philosopher of Modern Times. He introduced the Indian Philosophy of Vedanta and Yoga in the Western world. He was a major force in the reformation of the Hindu religion in India. He began his search for God by following the scientific approach, in the process of his quest, he met mystic Ramakrishna Paramhansa and became a great spiritualist of Neo-Vedanta and a preacher of his Guru's message. He laid philosophical foundations for Hindu cultural reformation and Indian society utilizing Advaita logic. His success lies in drawing social philosophy from the thoughts of Advaita Vedanta which paved the way for the social reforms in India. He represented Neo-Vedanta linked with transcendentalism's new thought, theosophy. He introduced four yoga's model, which made him practical Vedantin to realize the divine force within every human being. He successfully amalgamated Western materialism with Indian spiritualism. He encouraged the practice of Advaita Vedanta in people's daily life linked with society, he preached spiritual stage through a humanistic stage, and in this process, he denied the evil practices by Indian priest class, Prince Class and trade class and sensitively responded towards the poverty and wretched conditions of working-class (the Shudras). He hated the practice of untouchability and laid a solid foundation for nationalism. He explored Indian philosophy and drew ethical Systems based on Advaita Vedanta, offering a solution for the salvation of humankind. This article made an effort to justify the significance of Vedanta philosophy in the development of every individual.

Keywords: Development, Vedanta, Soul, Neo-Vedanta, Spiritualism, Yoga, Advaita Vedanta, Salvation.

I. Introduction

Swami Vivekananda, born Narendra Nath Dutta (1863-1920) was a Hindu monk and chief disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He was a true nationalist in the heart and soul and devoted his entire life to serving the people. Swamiji's concept of nationalism is deeply rooted in Indian spirituality and morality. He contributed to sowing the seed of nationalism in the mind of Indian people in the light of spiritual philosophy. He first launched spiritual philosophy Vedanta and Yoga from Eastern to Western World. Vivekananda was a major force in the reformation of Hindu culture and society in Bengal. His spiritual speech and inspired the Indian masses to sacrifice their life for the interest of the country.

The concept of Nationalism by Vivekananda was highly critical to British colonialism because he held that due to their rule, Indians lost their confidence, famines engulfed the land, farmers and artisans were destroyed to poverty. Exploitation was running in every sphere of economic infrastructure. Indians were failure to save the cottage industry, to build up any big industry. He said that every Indian should know the evil effort of British rule. According to Vivekananda, the national regeneration of India would begin when people became fearless and started demanding their rights. ⁽¹⁾ He preached Vedanta principles to use the Divine Power of an individual to free the motherland. So, Vivekananda modified Vedanta's philosophy in Practical Vedanta philosophy to increase the strength of the Indian masses. With the help of practical Vedanta, he tried to develop solidarity and oneness of the spirit by the elimination of social and caste evils in Indian society. He deeply contributed to arouse nationalism on the spiritual aspect among Indians and influenced the youth society for the countrymen.

II. The Methodology of the study

This research study is based on secondary data mostly on the books and articles related to Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda's writings are an important source for this study. An attempt has been done to evaluate his thought about the reformation of the Indian people. After understanding his thought and works, we will realize the role of Swami Vivekananda to modify the human mind to reconstruct a developed society in India.

III. The objectives of the study:

- To know about the concept of Vedanta Philosophy.
- To understand the practical Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda.
- To know about the significance of Practical Vedanta for human development.

IV. The concept of Vedanta Philosophy

Vedanta or Uttara Mimansa is one of the sixth school of Hindu philosophy. Vedanta means "end of the Vedas" reflecting ideas that derived from speculations and philosophy contained in the Upanishad. ⁽²⁾ According to Advaita Vedanta Philosophy, **Brahma is the ultimate reality and essence of all things.** It is attributed to less and unconditioned. Brahma is the only reality and



this World is the illusory appearance. The individual soul is non-difference from Brahma. ⁽³⁾ Upanishads or Vedanta present religion as a concept of Anubhava; experience, realization. It is not second-hand knowledge like theology or outer rituals, but a first-hand real experience.

The Vedanta philosophy has been evolved from the Upanishad which happened at the end of Vedas. Vivekananda opined that **“Vedanta never teach anything impossible”** ⁽⁴⁾ One important sentence which is also known as Mahavakya in Upanishad is ‘Tatvamasi’ or thou art that, which means soul and infinite soul. The human soul is impure and omniscient. ⁽⁵⁾ Vivekananda said, **“The Vedanta teaches men to have faith in themselves first.”** The main principle of Vedanta philosophy is that a man who does not believe in himself is an atheist. ⁽⁶⁾

V. Swami Vivekananda’s view on Practical Vedanta for Spiritual unity among religions

Vivekananda was a Vedantic monk and a strong believer in Advaita or Monism. He had a firm faith in the unity of godhood and the deeper unity of all religions. Every religion has its rituals, mythology, and fundamental principles. The internal truth among religions is common on the spiritual line.

Vivekananda believed that spirituality is the vital strength of the nation. India will lose its identity without spiritual practice. Spirituality gives freedom from all fascinations and misery. Acceptance and assimilation of plurality is the core motto of nationalism in the light of Vedantic philosophy. He said, “If one religion is true, then all other must be true” ⁽⁷⁾ unity among religions was the main essence of Vedanta for Indian nationalism.

A nation can be formed with the driving nature of the society. In the principle of Vedanta, human nature is divine. Freedom of mind is necessary for the growth of the national spirit. Indians should be proud of their nation and declare that all Indians are brothers. In the light of Practical Vedanta philosophy, there are four components of nationalism. ⁽⁸⁾ They are –

a) There are unity and oneness of the Indian people despite their outward diversity.

b) It is necessary to solve caste conflicts to inculcate the spirit of social solidarity.

Indian consists of all religious communities.

c) The strong feeling of nationalism in India can be developed by young people by devoting their life to the nation.

Before the judgment of Vivekananda’s concept of practical Vedanta, we have to understand his time. It was ragged, poor India under British colonial rule. As a Vedanta follower, he inspired the Indian masses to arouse their inner-strength for making a strong nation. He called the nation, “do not forget, your life is sacrificed to your mother (India)”. Vivekananda devoted his entire life following “karma yoga” for the upliftment of Indian people. ⁽⁹⁾

VI. Swami Vivekananda’s concept of Practical Vedanta

Practical Vedanta Vivekananda, the person who could perform the colossal feat of finishing the first eleven-volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica (out of a total of twenty) had a passionate urge to experience directly the ecstatic absorption with the subject objectless (asamprajanta) beatific supernal state. The late Brajendra Nath seal testifies to the deep and restless passion of Vivekananda to apprehend the highest truth from his early young days. Although the Swami was a revered teacher of the monistic Vedanta, still the devotional mood characteristic of the great Vedantic Acharyas, like Madhava and Vallabha – was also prominent in his person. The world knows him as a gigantic mind who employed his stupendous will power and energy to bring about a regeneration of India. This monk, social energies, and humanist philanthropist wanted, as he said, to fall on the society like an avalanche. He was a pilgrim of the city of god and a warrior for the cause of the suppressed. Hence the Swami’s personality was notable for its comprehensiveness and deep sensitiveness to the evils prevalent in the socio-economic and moral structure of the country. He preached both monistic asceticism and social service. His intellectual vision was immensely clear and he could easily penetrate the currents and cross-currents that were manifested in the history of India.

Vivekananda advocated the monism of the Upanishads as systematized by Badarayana and Samkara. The ever - conceit blissful reality was to him the supreme extent and the eternal reality and could be realized as a result of philosophic thinking and living. The world, according to the view of Sankara, is the vivarta of Brahma. But Vivekananda did not wholly deny the reality of the cosmos, although he was bound to do so philosophically. He was inspired by his great teacher who believed in the “motherhood” of the governing principle of the universe, a tantric doctrine, and formula, which in its incipient forms is also found in the religious systems of the ancient Indus valley and western Asia. Vivekananda has pointed out in his American lectures that the Vedantic metaphysics. Which teaches spiritual equality is the reading guarantee of equal treatment to the vast masses. The French revolution taught liberty and equality, but it degenerated into the despotic imperialism of Napoleon 1 and 111 and the Russian slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat is now the slogan of the dictatorship of a manipulating group, ‘the vanguard’ because these explosive movements were not ethnically inspired. After all, genuine ethics and social morality are meant for good behavior and the development of freedom, right, self-consciousness, and good in the world. The Vedantic metaphysics does not neutralize the



subjective disposition to ethical life because of its Mayavada but strengthens moral action by providing to that a rock-like spiritual foundation.

VII. Vivekananda's idea on Spiritual Nationalism:

Vivekananda gave a pragmatic view of religion **“Strength is religion. “The essence of my religion is strength. Strength is greater than any religion and nothing is greater than strength.** “So, the strength of a nation can be developed with the growth of self-confidence and self-reliance. Spiritual strength can be a uniting factor among Indians for the freedom struggle.

Awareness of Spiritual Unity among the Indian people by Vivekananda can be mentioned in the brief to arouse the nation following:

- 1) The strength of the nation is in spiritual unity.
- 2) Each nation represents one theme in life.
- 3) Sacrifice, love to unite a nation.
- 4) The nation must hold to national status and institutions. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Vivekananda's concept of nationalism was deeply rooted in the Indian spiritual tradition. He played a key role to launch spirituality to shape nationalism to free the motherland. His concept of nationalism is based on Humanism and Universalism. He taught us to get rid of the first of self-inflicted bondages and ultimate miseries. Without awareness of humanity and fraternity, a nation never achieves its oneness and solid foundation. ⁽¹¹⁾ In the light of spirituality, Vivekananda said, “Each nation has a message of delivering, a destiny to fulfill; each nation has a mission to accomplish”.⁽¹²⁾ Vedanta always preached the Universalism of all soul cutting the barriers of social evils. Humanism can't be established in society without spiritual oneness among people. His nationalism was not materialistic, but purely spiritual which is considered, to be the source of all strength of the nation. According to Vivekananda, the national regeneration of India would begin when Indians become fearless and would protest against oppressive foreign rulers.

The view of M N Roy is that the nationalism of Vivekananda was like Spiritual imperialism. But the view was controversial. What Vivekananda pleaded for not imperialism but nationalism based on spiritualism and he can be called the father of religious and spiritual nationalism in India. To quote Swamiji, “Race, religion, government, all those together make the nation.”⁽¹³⁾ Vivekananda defines religion not as a creed or dogma but as a manifestation of the divinity that is already in man. So, we must respect the human being as a spark of divinity. Outwardly one may be a Muslim, Hindu, and Christian, male, female, black or white. These all are external. There is nothing narrow or sectarian view in the concept of spiritual nationalism by Vivekananda. Thus, religious unity among religious would be a solid foundation of Indian nationalism and also be a model for the World. ⁽¹⁴⁾

VIII. Vivekananda's Practical Vedanta for human development

Swami Vivekananda explored Indian philosophy and drew ethical Systems based on Advaita Vedanta, offering a solution for the salvation of humankind. He recognized the energy of individual humans as a form of divinity and built tremendous positive psychology for humankind. He applied the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta to build humanity and spirituality. ⁽¹⁵⁾ It all reflected his practical Vedanta idealism. Vivekananda was a great philosopher of Advaita Vedanta and a social reformer in colonial India

The spiritual thoughts of Vivekananda have their moorings in the Vedanta philosophy, which is a systematic exposition of the Upanishads. However, he gives a modern interpretation of the ancient ideas to make them practical. He says, The Vedanta, therefore, as a religion must be intensely practical. We must be able to carry it out in every part of our lives. He advocated firmly on religious tolerance and never condemned any form of religion. Once Vivekananda said, “If one religion is true, all the others must be true.” ⁽¹⁶⁾ Communalism cannot make a sound society towards development. He realized the maladies of Indian society and gave his practical ideas to eliminate the troubles forever. He said to practice Vedanta Philosophy in our day to day lives. Swamiji wrote a letter to Sister Nivedita on 7 June 1896; **“My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is to preach unto mankind their divinity and how to make it manifest in every moment of life.”** Indeed, his philosophy can make an ideal individual in multi-cultural India irrespective of caste and religious evils. He supported spiritual oneness among religions to stop religious conflict and to stop Brahminical domination over lower caste people. His life was devoted to the service of the people as worship to God. Practical Vedanta says individual soul as a part of God (Supreme Soul) and the same is reflected in others no conflict will be there.

IX. Conclusion

Vivekananda gave the Indian masses a proper understanding of their great spiritual heritage to perform selfless action for the Motherland. He pointed out to Indians the drawbacks of Western culture and the need for the Indians to overcome their drawbacks. In the way, Vivekananda devoted himself to make India-a nation with a global mission with spiritual strength. Sense of unity, pride in the past, sense of mission-these noble ideas of Swamiji created revolutionary awareness among Youth and common people to sacrifice their lives for Mother India. He never supports communal thought or Hindu oppression over others. He always criticized superstitions,



religious dogmas, and rituals. As the disciple of Ramkrishna, Swamiji dedicated his life to form a new India on religious tolerance and unity cutting the barriers of social evils. Netaji Subahs Chandra Bose wrote, "Swamiji harmonized the East and West, religion and science, past and present." So, it is the reason Vivekananda is called truly the father of modern nationalism in India. His practical Vedanta makes a person with divine power within himself for the highest development of life. Development in an individual means development for the country. His Practical Vedanta emphasized to help every person in all situations of life attain strength and fulfillment. Swami Vivekananda has given to realize Divine force within every single person to the highest development. If we can believe that all divine power is within us, we can stop most of the miseries from our God-gifted life and we can feel we are just joyful and peaceful souls.

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