

## Swami Vivekananda's lucid explanation of practical Spiritual life as nothing but man-making in all respects : An Appraisal

Dr.C.Ramya

Asst. Professor in English, E.M.G. Yadhava College for Women, Madurai (India)

---

### ARTICLE DETAILS

#### Article History

Published Online: 10 December 2018

#### Keywords

Religion, Spirituality, Vedanta  
Philosophy, Divinity, Transformation

---

### ABSTRACT

This paper shows a glimpse on practical spiritual life projected through the words and life of Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda is an inspiring personality, whose mission was the interpretation of India's spiritual culture in Vedantic setting. He also tried to exalt the religious consciousness through the sensible and humanistic teaching of the Vedanta philosophy. The significant approach of Vivekananda towards Indian culture is his recognition of the importance of faith or Self-confidence in the life of a nation and individuality. This is neatly picturized in this paper.

---

From time immemorial, God has been a symbol of power for all human beings. The concept of God is as different as there are different religions. The one thing which seems to be common in all religions is that God is 'omnipotent' (all powerful), 'omnipresent' meaning 'present everywhere', 'omniscient' meaning knowing 'knowing everything' and 'Omni benevolent' meaning 'benevolent to all'. Each religion claims God in its own way and eventually there are as many Gods as there are religions. As there are many Gods, the ways of worship seem to be many being different in attitude and approach. Every religionist opines and accepts the notion that human beings are susceptible to sins and deficiencies and for getting freed themselves from such sins and weaknesses and also for rising higher in principle, attitude and idealism, they do worship so as to form and establish healthy relationship between God and human beings. Swami Vivekananda aptly holds:

"Ignorant or wise, saint or sinner, to every human being the highest ideals of beauty, of sublimity and of power, gives us the completest conception of the loving and lovable God' (TC WSV 89)

Human beings are not satisfied with what they are. They long to reach a state where they can breathe peacefully breaking all the physical fetters. To these aspiring human beings God is the perfect balance state. Unfortunately, instead of remaining peaceful, people belonging to different faiths are prone to misunderstand one another and consequently fight with one another making human life virtually a 'hell'. It may be pointed out that each one tries to establish the supremacy of its own God. Hence the fear and feeling of conquered and conqueror are there. They fail to understand that "all beings, great or small are equally manifestations of God, the difference is only in the manifestation" (TCWSV 424). Thus, God, the source of spiritualism, has become a source of endless disputation and violence. Swami Vivekananda honestly and truly opined that the cause of all the miseries was just 'misunderstanding'. Till the misunderstanding is removed totally, the religious zealots will be making life miserable and Swami explained so neatly that god is there to sublimate human feelings and enable a human being to develop lofty outlook and perfect living. He was activated by the spirit of Advaita meaning 'explanation'. The universal spirit that is all-pervading is Brahman – God, and everything in Nature is 'soul'

and a manifest of God. "All is Brahman, the one without a second; only the Brahman, as unity or absolute, is too much of an abstraction to be loved and worshipped." (37) What is needed is a perfect knowledge to understand this. According to Advaita, the perception of anything else apart from Brahman is Maya or illusion.

What Swami Vivekananda propagated is that everyone should try to reach the perfect state of God where he is one with God. Every individual, according to Advaita, is a soul and it is a manifestation of the universal soul. Swami tried to establish the true relationship of the individual soul with the universal soul. He even stressed that no verbal or physical contact with the universal soul could be established unless there is a sincere attempt to experience the relationship. "He knew that a man becomes divine if he strives to be so; for this reason he said, following the manner of his own master, seek only after one thing, and that, God" (TLSV 6). According to Swami, there is only one God and without name, form or colour, He is the only 'Absolute and Abstract' beyond words and description and further stated that God could only be experienced and this experience could not be described in words. In the beginning, this experience would seem to be impracticable but by constant practice, gradually it leads a soul to move towards higher and higher levels and a final stage comes where there is an experience that the experience that the individual soul and Absolute are one and the same. This experience and feeling of oneness are the cream of Upanishads. In the words of Swami, this experience needs a kind of highest knowledge – ParamJnana – to the realization of Godliness – Brahma Tatvam. When he talks about the knowledge for the realization of the Absolute, he says, "knowledge is nothing but finding unity in the midst of diversity" (TCWSV 397).

Swami Vivekananda was first pained by the indifference of modern Indians to spiritualism. Then he looked at the world and found that the orientals were trying to copy the Western civilization blindly. Humanity at large, in the modern world, needs a guide and that guide could only be an Indian. The crippled humanity was confronted with an all – pervasive, all – powerful, all captivating personality Swami Vivekananda. "His was a rich personality in which the physical, mental, intellectual

and moral qualities fructified into a fine example of a spiritual being" (Talghatti 167). Truly speaking, what the modern world wants is a certain amount of peace of mind; this kind of feeling had become prominent during the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the so-called Western civilization could hardly provide them with peace of mind. Then the people realized that there was something beyond their achievement through science which needed a simple but clear elaboration. Right at that time, Swami came to their rescue. His demonstration of realization of peace through spiritual experience became a guide for the people at crossroads. Thus, Swami showed that spiritualism is more dynamic in the affairs of day to day life. In the words of Swami,

"My ideal, indeed, can be put into a few words and that is to preach unto mankind their divinity and had to make it manifest in every moment of life" (TSLV III).

The life of Swami Vivekananda shows what a spell he could exercise on the suffering humanity with his powerful speeches on spiritualism. In fact, in the parliament of Religions, every word he uttered kept the audience spell-bound. "He came, a stranger, unheralded, but by the force of his magnetic eloquence and the purity of his personal character, he commanded the attention and interest of thousands and attracted their minds to the study of the subject almost entirely unknown to them" (P 211). Everyone who listened to Swami experienced that there was an electrifying power in his speech. Lucidity in expressing subtler and more abstract ideas endeared him to his audience. What was once thought 'dead spiritualism' was made dynamic by the measured powerful speeches of Swami. Swami said, "spiritually can be communicated just as really as I can give you a flower". This is true in the most literal sense. This communication was the unshakable aim of Swami's mission from start to finish. It should also be noted that Swami Vivekananda never wanted all men to be Sanyasa or monkhood. His contention was that spiritualism was a dynamically active spirit of life that goods and guides the human life. According to him, Living a meaningful and contented life, spirituality is as important as anything else. Whoever came under the magic spell of Swamiji realised that spiritualism was always dynamic and to add to that they even realised that only spiritualism made their lives dynamic. "Swamiji is the beacon light of the world in this darkest day of materialistic civilization" (Dutta 264).

What is commonly understood from his speeches is that what Swami Vivekananda experienced he wanted everyone to experience. 'In the course of a single interview, the Swami could often present to the audience a series of new ideas for the basis of a broad and all inclusive spiritual life' (55). So he reminded everyone of his listeners of the famous line of the Upanishads – "Awake, Arise and stop not till the goal is reached." Though extempore, he could enlighten his listener with clarity and lucidity or anything. What he expected about India was her special spiritual heritage which he thought was her special spiritual heritage which he thought was the hope of the whole of the world". Here one can notice that spiritualism is made dynamic or practical-dynamic in the sense that every human being can practice Swami Vividishananda has gone to the extent of calling him "the spiritual dynamo" (P 171).

Swamiji's glory lies in the fact that he made people think. He not only explained what lay buried in the Indian ancient scriptures. But his explanation was not theoretical it was based on personal experience. His lucid explanation of practical spiritual life showed a new way of life. His appeal was universal and his concern was the upliftment of entire humanity. The influence of his lectures on spirituality was so great that everybody understood that "Swamiji's religion was man-making. His education was man-making and the life he lived was man-making" (Jagtiani 45). His life's ambition was to see everyone a 'complete individual' free from the fetters of nation, religion, creed and caste. He was concerned with the 'soul' of every individual as he very often emphasized that each individual carried divinity in him.

Swami Vivekananda explained that human birth is precious and every individual has the feeling to have liberation. He wanted to canalysethe aspiration for liberation. This liberation does not consist in physical death but in the process of assimilating the divinity in man. He appealed to people to have faith in them first so that they could develop faith in other things. He says:

"I wish that faith would come to each of you and everyone of you would stand up a giant, a world-mover with a gigantic intellect – an infinite God in every aspect". (228)

He believed that by personal experience, each individual would not only transform himself but would also contribute a little towards the transformation of the world. This transformation, he wished, should make life purposeful and experience 'spiritual'. He did tremendously unfold the mysteries of human life by adding dynamism to spiritual life. He stressed only on the virtues of life so that the whole universe could become a heaven on earth. He says, "I am the teacher of virtue, not of sin. I glory in being the preacher of light and not of darkness". He lived a dynamically active life and showed what dynamism is. He is concerned more with the well being of the universal mankind. He is a beacon light that shows what we live is not living and there is more to realize in life in the process of living. The glory of Swami Vivekananda lies in the fact that he was able to bring about a new awakening among men. TapashSankarDutta observes rightly:

'Swamiji's new vedantic movement brings about a spiritual movement which would recognize Divinity in every creature high or low, which would concentrate all its energy in aiding humanity to realize its true Divine nature" (177).

The divinity of man is the important thing one has to consider in understanding the 'source of spiritualism' – God. The Upanishads say 'Thou art that – Tat Twam Asi. Here, 'that' is the perfect, Absolute Brahman and 'Thou' is the individual soul. The individual soul is a part of the complete Brahman. Swami stressed that a man should understand himself; should have faith in himself. If he does not believe in himself, he cannot believe in anything else in this world. Not-believing in one self is Atheism in Vedanta. Swami firmly believed that Atheism is something unbecoming a human being. He laughed

at people who proclaimed that Atheism was born out of scientific analysis of the universe. Whatever Swami spoke of it was not abstract but a scientific explanation of the 'being of the Universe'. Spiritual experience and the realization of Truth in the vedantic way make a man more scientific; more things are inferred through observation based on certain established principles. If this is interpreted as science, then, according to Swami Vivekananda, the total personal spiritual experience is more scientific. There are no inferences based on observation and established principles in the science of spiritualism. Swami would even prove here that there is an end to science but there is no end to spiritualism. The more an individual thinks about God, the closer he will feel he is to God. 'Oneness' and 'Equality' are born out of spiritual experience.

Swami Vivekananda stressed very often on the point that God lives in every individual. The divinity of man should be allowed to blossom. It needs purity of thought, speech and action. Purity included love and service. God has given man strength to live and let others live. But man, in the modern world, thinks only about himself. He has forgotten that he

belongs to the society in which he lives. Selfishness spoils the harmonious living in society. Swami Vivekananda proclaimed that in the realization of 'Brahman', one should not forget that he should help others in the process of spiritual realization. Swamiji stressed that the teachings of all religions are not contradictory but complementary. This unifying force of Swami has been dynamic through all his lectures. Hence, he very often emphasized that "the God of all religions is the realizing of God in the soul" (Vidyatmananda 8).

To conclude, Swami Vivekananda wanted a religion of man-making by expecting man to recognize the divinity in him and the religion he practices should help him to develop this outlook. Swamiji dreamed of a man who has the physical, spiritual, moral and intellectual strength. His spiritualism consisted in the harmonious development of all these qualities. In a word, Swami Vivekananda wished that an earnest spiritualist should try to find the 'unity in diversity'. By infusing a new dynamism into ancient Indian spiritualism, Swami Vivekananda longed for communal harmony and reintegration of world society at large in all respects.

### Works Cited

1. **Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda**. Vol.III, 10<sup>th</sup>ed. Calcutta: AdvaitaAshrama, 1970.
2. Dutta, TapashSankar. **A Study of the Philosophy of Vivekananda**. Calcutta :Sribhumi Publishing Co, 1982.
3. Talghatti, S.R. "Ramakrishna and Vivekananda" (ed.) Donald H.Bishop. **Thinkers of the Indian Renaissance** Delhi : Publication Division, 1983.
4. **The Life of Swami Vivekananda**, Vol.II. Calcutta :AdvaitaAshrama, 1981.
5. Vidyatmananda, Swami. **What Religion is in the Words of Swami Vivekananda**. Calcutta :AdvaitaAshrama, 1978.
6. Vividishananda, **Swami. Spiritual Ideas for Modern Man**. BelurMath : Ramakrishna Mission SaradaPitha, 1980.