



Swami Vivekananda's practical Vedanta: Ideas and thoughts

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Abstract

Swami Vivekananda was an Indian Philosopher of Modern Times. He introduced Indian Philosophy of Vedanta and Yoga in the Western world. He was a major force in the reformation of Hindu religion in India. He began his search for God by following scientific approach, in the process of his quest, he met mystic Ramakrishna Paramhansa and became a great spiritualist of Neo-Vedanta. 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 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 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 solid foundation for nationalism. He explored Indian philosophy and drew ethical Systems on the basis of Advaita Vedanta, offering solution for the salvation of humankind. He recognized the energy of individual human as a form of divinity and built a tremendous positive psychology for humankind. He applied philosophy of Advaita Vedanta to build humanity and spirituality. It all reflected his practical Vedanta idealism. Thus Vivekananda acted as a great philosopher of Advaita Vedanta and social reformer in colonial India. This article gives the views of Swami Vivekananda on Vedanta.

Keywords: vedanta, advaita vedanta

Introduction

His philosophy is vedantic based on the beliefs that God alone is real, that man is God his self, and that this realization of divinity in oneself and others is the goal of life. Vivekananda, however, modifies what he considered to be classical Vedanta. He refused to believe that vedantas is theoretical and held that it is practical. He did not agree with the view that Vedanta teaches quietism and renunciation. He did not also reconcile himself the view of individual salvation where the rest of humanity groaned and sighed in misery and held that vedanta could be practiced in this very world.

Two points deserve mention in this connection. One is that inspite of the best motive the second point is that Vedanta in the hands of Vivekananda becomes as instrument for revitalizing and regulating India by the masses strong, self-reliant and great. In the philosophy of Vivekananda, contemplation and activity, Nirvakalpa Samadhi and humanitarians work, God and the world run parallel to each other. Neither spirituality is abandoned nor social service is neglected but they are synthesized.

Words of Swami Vivekananda

- It is a tremendous error to feel helpless. Do not seek help from anyone. We are our own help. If we cannot help ourselves, there is none to help us.
- The one theme of the Vedanta philosophy is the search after unity.
- If I do a good action, there is no power in the universe which can stop its being good results.
- Nothing else is necessary but these Love, Sincerity & patience.

Vedanta

The philosophy of Vedanta has been evolved from the Upanishads which occur at the end of the Vedas. Its key-note is strength, and unity in variety its immortal theme. It demonstrates the essential unity of all religions, recognizing them all as so many paths of the same Truth. It accepts all the great prophets, teachers, and sons of God, for it holds that all are manifestations of the one Godhead; and accepting all, it does not attempt to make converts. It does not inculcate dogmas but offers a rational basis for the principles and practices common to religions everywhere. Therefore it's teaching appeal to men and women irrespective of race, nationality and religious persuasion. In the light of its teaching the followers of different religions have a better understanding of their respective religions, and of other religions as well. The practice of Vedanta is usually called Yoga, a general name for the practical techniques by which the theoretical knowledge of the philosophy is realized. It is a much more comprehensive scheme of life than the posture and breathing exercises which sometimes pass for yoga. It is concerned not so much with the subnormal and the abnormal, as with the normal and its evolution into the supernormal.

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 into 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 real and could be realized as a result of philosophic thinking and living. The world, according to the view of samkara, 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 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 read guarantee of an equal treatment to the vast masses. The French revolution taught liberty and equality, but it degenerated into the despotic imperialisms of Napoleons I and III 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 ethically 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.

Vedanta: Three fundamental truths

1. That man's real nature is divine.
2. That is the aim of man's life on earth to unfold and manifest his Godhead, which is eternally existent within him, but hidden.
3. That truth is universal.

Fundamental Truths of Vedanta According to Swami Vivekananda

1. The inherent divinity of man.
2. The non-duality of the Ultimate Reality, of Brahman or Atman.
3. The ultimate Reality as Brahman or the Absolute of Philosophy, is also the Intimate Reality as Iswara or God, of religion.
4. The Ultimate Reality as the Atman becomes capable, of not just a belief in Him, but of the realization or experience

or anubhava of Him, by man.

5. Such anubhava, and the struggle towards it, constitutes dynamic spirituality, and the true meaning of religion, and not just a belief in His existence and a static piety based on it.
6. Such dynamic spirituality means the steady spiritual growth of man, or his growth in his spiritual dimension, by developing increasing awareness by him of his inborn divine nature.
7. Such spiritual growth is to be achieved by man in the context of his life and work by the comprehensive spiritual technique of Yoga as taught in the Bhagavad Gita, which bridges the gulf between the secular and the sacred, between life and religion.

Conclusion

Swami Vivekananda explored Indian philosophy and drew ethical Systems on the basis of Advaita Vedanta, offering solution for the salvation of humankind. He recognized the energy of individual human as a form of divinity and built a tremendous positive psychology for humankind. He applied philosophy of Advaita Vedanta to build humanity and spirituality. It all reflected his practical Vedanta idealism. Vivekananda was as a great philosopher of Advaita Vedanta and 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.

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