

The Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda

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Chapter – I As is well known Narendra Dutta before sailing to Chicago to attend the Parliament of Religions in 1893 he took the name of Swami Vivekananda after Maharaj Ajit Singh of the Ketri State requested him to do so changing from Sachidanand that he used before. The name means the blisses of discerning wisdom and was adopted by him when he left for Chicago.

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1. Introduction

Through it is difficult to analyze the vastness of the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda but still I have tried to give some of the basic facts as contained in his philosophy.

- The Preaching in America.
- The founding of the Ramakrishnan.
- Maya and the march to freedom.
- The great paths (The four Yogas)
- The Universal Science – Religion

Preaching in America

After he got clearance from his Master Ramakrishna, he sailed for America and so on reaching there his catchy two words while addressing the Parliament of Religions “Brothers and Sisters of America” he thundered the Parliament with clapping. He rode their like a lion and started his speech wherever he went which was unstoppable.

Sri Romaine Rolland in his book “The Life of Vivekananda” and the Universal Gospel has beautifully described “Grid up your Loins my boys ! I am called by the Lord for this work. The hope his in you, In the meek, the lowly, and the faithful. Feel the miserable and look up for the help it shall come. I have travelled twelve years with this load in my heart and this in my head. I have gone from door to door of the so called rich and the greats. With a bleeding heart I have crossed half the world to this strange land seeking for help. The Lord will help me, I may perish of cold and hunger in this land but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, the struggle for the poor, the ignorant and the oppressed. Go down on you faces before him and make a great sacrifice of a whole of them these three hundred million, going down and down every day ... Glory into the Lord, we will succeed Hundreds would fall in the struggle, hundreds would be ready to take it up Faith-Sympathy. Life is nothing, death is nothing. Glory unto the Lord march on, the Lord is our General. Do not look back to see who falls forward Onward”.

He further said “Plunge into the fire my children... Everything will come to you, if you have only faith. Let each one of us pray day and night for them... I am no physician, no philosopher, nay no saint. I am poor, I love the poor who feels for India for the two hundred millions of men and women sunken for ever in poverty and ignorance ? Where is the way out ? Who will bring the them ? Let this people be our God. Him I call a great Mahatma (great soul) whose heart bleeds for the poor. So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold everyman a traitor who

having been educated at their expense, pays not the least to head to them”.¹

The founding of the Ram Krishna Mission

A real leader of men does not omit the smallest detail, Vivekananda that if he was to lead the people of the conquest on an ideal, it as not enough to inflame their **odour**, he had to control them in a spiritual, militia. The chosen few must be presented to this people as types of the new man, for their very existence was the pledge of the order that was to be. That is who Vivekananda as soon as he was free from his triumphs in Madras and Calcutta immediately turned his attention to the monastery of Alambazar. The Ramkrishna’s monks had betaken themselves in 1892 from Bangalore to Alambazar near Dakshineswar, Ramakrishna sanctuary. Several had come to meet Swami Vivekananda at Colombo; Sadanand his first disciple, had traversed the whole of India to the first to welcome him. In his ringing discourses at Madras and Calcutta **2**. He had spoken constantly in the name of Ramakrishna; “M Master and my ideal, my hero, my god in this life. He claimed to the voice of Paramhansa, and went so far as to refuse the merit of all initiative, of all new thought and to claim that he was merely a faithful steward exactly carrying out the Master’s order. He forced his brethren to received the European disciples into their community, and to take up the mission of service and social help. He sternly forbade them to think any longer of themselves and there own salvation. He came, so he declared to create a new order of Sanyasins, who would go down to hell, if need to save others. He went to Madras and founded a centre for the propagation of Vedanta principles in Southern India. He went to Murshidabad, where famine was ranging and devoted himself to the relief of the victims.

In May 1, 1897 all Ramkrishnan’s monastic disciples were summoned to Calcutta in the home of their member, Balram. Vivekanand spoke of their master. He said that without strict organization nothing lasting could be established. In a country like India it was not easy to begin such an organization on the republican system, where each had an equal voice and where decisions were according to the vote of a majority. For the next moment the next business was the selection of the heads, Vivekanand the General President, made Brahmanand and Yogen President and Vice President of the Calcutta centre, and they were to meet every Sunday at Balram’s house. Vivekananda then without further delay inaugurated the two fold talk of joublie service and Vedanta teaching. Both sides were assured of their mutual devotion. Sri Ramkrishna was for greater than what his disciples understand him to be. He was the embodiment of spiritual

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ideas capable of development in different eyes. One glance of his gracious eyes can create a hundred thousand Vivekananda at this instant. I shall scatter his broadcast over this world. For dear Ramkrishnan the man, his world was still precious. He had no intention of raising an altar to a new God but of shedding on mankind the many of his thought – thought that first and foremost was to be expressed in action. Religion, if it is a true religion must be practical. It was not born to create a new sect in the world, too full of sects already. These were the very words of Ramkrishna. This was the theme of Lectures in the Punjab during October and November in 1897.

One day he suddenly declared “you think Jana is dry knowledge to be attained by a desert path killing out the tenderest faculties of the heart ! your Bhakti is sentimental nonsense, which makes one impotency. You want to preach Ramkrishnan as you have understood him, which is mighty little! Hands off! Who cares for your Bhakti and Mukti? Who cares what your scriptures say, I will go into thousand hills cheerfully, if your house my countrymen immersed in Tamas to stand on their own feet and be men inspired with the spirit of Karma Yoga. I am not a servant of Ramkrishna or any one but of him only who serves and helps others, without caring for his own Bhakti or Mukti?”

Swami Vivekanand further said that there is no rest for me. What Ramkrishnan called Kali to take possession of my soul and body three or four days before he left this earth and that forces me to work, work and never allows me busy myself with my own personal needs”.³ It was before his death that speaking to a disciple, Sarat Chandra Chakravorty, Vivekananda told him about this mysterious transmission which took place in him two or three days before Ramkrishnan’s death. “Ramkrishna made him sit in front of him while he gazed into my eyes and passed into Samadhi. Then I perceived a powerful current of subtle force like an electric shock. The body was transpierced. I also lost consciousness. For how long I do not know when returned to myself. I saw the master weeping. He said to me with an infinite tenderness, ‘O my Naren, I am nothing now but a poorfaker. I have given them all my virtue of this gift thou will do great things in this world, and not till afterwards will it be to me permitted to return.’ It seems to me that it was this force which carried me into the turmoil and makes me work, work?”

Soon after founding of the R. K. Mission Vivekananda was obliged to stop his own activities and undergo a course of treatment for several weeks at Almora. Nevertheless he was able to write. It will never stop (July 9, 1897) only one idea was burning in my brains start the machine for elevation of the Indian masses and that I have succeeded in doing to certain extent. It would have made your heart glad to see was my boys are working in the midst of famine and disease and misery and feeding the starving chandala, and the Lord sends help to me and then to all He was with me, the believed as he was when I was in America. But in England when I was roaming about unknown from place to place in India. I felt my task was done at most three or four years more of life is left I have lost all wish for my salvation. I have never wanted earthly enjoyments. I have seen my machine in strong working orders and then know for certain that I have put in a

lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back. I will sit what out caring what will be next and maybe born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists the only God I believe in the sum total of all souls. He made use of the latest report from his illness to increase his work tenfold. From August to December 1897, he went like a whirlwind through Northern India from Punjab to Kashmir sowing his seed wherever he went. He discussed with the Maharaja the possibility of founding a great monastery in Kashmir, he preached to the students of the Lahore Colleges wiggling strength and belief in God. As a preparation for belief in God and he formed among them an association, purely unsectarian for the relief hygiene and education of the people. Wherever he went he never wearied to rebuild individual character in India to be delivered the God within him. He constantly subjected faith to the test of action.

He tried to remedy several injustices by preaching inter-marriage between the caste and subdivision of castes, so that they might draw nearer to each other by ameliorating the condition of outcastes, by occupying himself with the fate of unmarried woman and Hindu widows by finding secret arrangements. The year 1898 was chiefly devoted to the founding of journals or reviews which were to be the intellectual organs of the order and a means for the education of India.

But the chief importance of this year 1898, was Vivekananda straining of his western disciple. They had come to his call Miss Margaret Noble at the end of January to found in conjunction with Miss Muller model institutions for the education of Indian women Mrs. Ole Bull and Josephine Macleod in February.⁵ In March Margaret Noble took the vow of Brahmcharya and the name of Nivedita (the canse rated one) Vivekananda introduced her in warm terms to the Calcutta public as a gift of England to India and that he might the better root out all trace of the memories, prejudices and customs of her country. He took her with a group of disciples on a journey of several months through historic India.

Maya and the march towards freedom

Buddhism says to men ‘Realize that all this is illusion while the Advaita Vedanta says “Realize that in illusion is real”. *Talks of Vivekananda with Nivedita in London) Nothing in this world is to be denied for Maya, illusion has his own reality. We are caught in the net worth of Phenomenon. Perhaps it would be higher and radical wisdom to cut the net like the net, like Buddha by total negation and to say “They do not exist”. But in the light of poignant joys and tragic sorrows without which life would be poor indeed, it is more human more precious, to say “they exist”. There are a snare, and to raise the eyes to discover that it is all a play of the sun. The play of the sun Brahman in Maya the huntress with nature her not. (com works Vol II P/88-89) Vivekananda has devoted to the special study of Maya a set of twice lectures delivered in 1896. (1) Maya and illusion (2) Maya and freedom (3) The absolute and manifestation (that is to say the phenomenal world). He returned perfectly to the subject in the course of interview and other philosophic and religious treatises. “And so all are marching towards

freedom. We are all journeying towards freedom". And Vivekananda recalled the mysterious of the Upanishads to the propounded. The question is – What is this universe? From does it arise ? Into where does it go ? And the answer is: In freedom it rests, and into freedom is melts away.

The Great Paths four Yogas

Karma Yoga

The general concept of the law of Karma or the Law of conservation (deZus; okf/kdk jLrs ek Qysl w dnkpu) We are to abide by the Laws of Karma which is a moral law. All the religions of the world believe in the Law of Karma.

But a very pertinent question arises – What happens after death ? We know that death is in available. If man does not exist after death then where does it go ? Every, religion believe that after death everyone goes into wilderness. Then a question arises – why does every religion or everyone believes in God. What is the sense of praying or worshiping goes ? Karma is more powerful and God does not rescue man from death then God's power become meaningless.

Karma Yoga says "Work incessantly but give up the attachment to work". Hold your mind free. This is the classic doctrine of the Gita. The ignorant work by the attachment to the Act; the Wiseman also work but beyond all attachment and solely for the good of the world. Referring to action to me let the spirit withdrawn into self and free from all the hope and interested persons motives, strive without troubling with scruple 3(P/195) Karma Yoga teaches that the ordinary dirty is on the lower plane nevertheless all of us have to do our duty. The only true duty is to be unattached and to work as free beings to give up all the work unto God. All our duties are his. The swam says there are two things which guide the conduct of men; might and mercy. The exercise of might is invariably the exercise of selfishness. All men and women try to make the most of was a Dever power of advantage they have got. Mercy is heaven itself. To be good, we all to be merciful. Even justice and right should stand on mercy. The selfless and unattached men may live in the very heart of a crowded and sinful city, he will not be touched by sin (vol 1) P/71. It is necessary in the study of Karma Yoga what duty is. The ordinary ideal of duty every where is that every good man follows the dictates of his conscience. (read from P/76/P/77).

There have been many Karma Yoga in India. Of these four derive special mention, First comes Lord Krishna special mention, First comes Lord Krishna, the central deity of the Gita and the Mahabharat. The Gospel of Karma Yoga was forgotten for ages together. Then Lord Krishna came and preached it to Arjuna. He removed all the doubts and put him on the road of valiant but non attached action. The, there was Lord Buddha Karma Yoga is the religion of the ago. Its practice is simple. There are no technicalities no ceremonials, no subtle disquisitions. The man in the street can very easily understand the philosophy of action. Karma Yoga asks us to be good and do good to love our neighbours, to sacrifice over selves for the cause of others, to work incessantly but without attachment to labour but not to claim the fruits of labour.

Raja Yoga

Although Vivekananda preaches his ideal the harmonious practice of four kinds of yoga there was on particularly his own, which might almost be called after him is the way of discrimination (viveka) Further it is the one that should be able to unite the East and west nan Yoga – The way of realization of knowledge or in other words the exploration and conquest the ultimate essence or Brahman through the mind. A man must be fully armed, equipped and drilled and that is the office of Raja Yoga. Although it is self-sufficient in its own sphere, it also plays the party of a preparatory school to the supreme yoga of knowledge. That is why I have put it at this point in my exposition and also because it was where Vivekananda put it.

Raja Yoga is the Raja, the king of Yogas and as a sign of royalty it is often spoken as yoga without any further qualification or designation. It is yogapar excellence. If by yoga we mean union with the supreme object and subject of knowledge Raja Yoga is the experimental psychophysical method for its direct attainment. Vivekananda called it 'the psychological yoga' since its field of action is the control and absolute mastery of the mind – the first condition of all knowledge (Jyan Yoga, which is the free nature of self and the (2) Bhakti yoga which is the search for and the realization of the supreme self, the fullness of the possession of the divine being (essays on the Gita fresh series Chap IV 1921).

The Raja Yoga holds that there is latent in the heart of every person a power to rise beyond, to transcend the limits of matter, on accessions to come face to face, as it were with the eternal reality, to be identified as it were with that reality and then after a time again to descend down to body consciousness. The science of Raja Yoga aims to rouse the power within man. The chief means is concentration of the mind compare your mind to a lake where the illness of the water is disturbed by stones continuously being thrown in it. I know very little of this science. But the little that I gained. I worked for thirty years of my life and for six years. I have been telling the people what little I know. It took me thirty years to learn it, thirty years of hard struggle. Sometimes I worked at it twenty hours during the twenty four. Sometimes I slept only one hour in the night. Sometimes there was hardly a sound, hardly a break sometimes I had to live in caves, think of that. And yet I know little or nothing, I have barely touched the hem of the garment of this science. But I can understand that as true and vast and wonderful (vol 1).

The science of Raja Yoga proposed to put before humanity a practical and scientifically worked out method of teaching the truth. In the first place, every science must have its own method of investigation. I would preach to you thousands of sermons, but they would not make you religious until you practiced the method. There are the truths of sages who had no method but to do good to the world. They all declare that they have found some truth higher than what the senses can bring us and they verify verification. "Thus we see in the study of the Raja Yoga, no faith or belief is necessary. That is what it teaches. Believe nothing until you find it out for yourself. That is what it teaches us. Truth requires no prop to make it stand. There is no mystery in what I teach. It is

wrong to blindly believe you must exercise your own reason and judgement.

According to the Raja Yoga the external world is but the gross form of the eternal, or subtle. The finer is always the cause, the grosser the effect. The immense life giving knowledge awakening divine making shower is in every man and is up in the mysterious kundalini and it is the object and the purpose of the Raja Yoga to awaken this power. The moment the Kundalini is awakened and begins to flow up through the hollow canal called sushumna the yogi begins to see wonderful visions and when it long reaches the brain the yogi attains final illumination. He becomes perfect it is the ambition of every yogi to awaken this power Kundalini and his spiritual greatness independent upon and can be measured by the awakened Kundalini.

The Universal Science – Religion

All narrow, limited fighting ideas of religion should be given up. The religious ideas of the future must be given up. The religious ideas of the future must embrace all that exists in the world and is good and great, and at the same time have in finite scope for future development religion for Vivekananda is synonymous with universalism of spirit and is not unit religious conceptions have attained to the universalism that religion is fully realized. For contrary to the belief of all who know it not religion is a matter for the future for more than for the past. It has only just begun so long as religion was in the hands of chosen few, or of a body of priests, it was in temples, churches, dogmas, ceremonials, forms and rituals, but when it came to the real, spiritual universal concept then and then alone religion will become real and living, it will come to over very nature, live in our every moment, penetrate every pore of our society than it has ever been before. (1. The necessity of Religion) materialism prevails in Europe today. You may pray for the salvation of the modern septs, but they do not yield. They want reason. 6

“I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship them all. I worship god with everyone of them. Is God’s book finished or still it is a continuous revelation. It is a marvelous book these spiritual revelations of this world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Korean, and all other sacred books are but so many pages and yet remained to be unfolded. Love, peace, brotherhood etc have become to us more words. Each one crew universal brotherhood. We are all equal. Do not be received by words. The World is full of blistering talk Vivekananda breaks in the midway of the hubbub and tries to make the disputants listen to at least two maxims of conduct, two provisional rules. The first do not destroy. Build if you can but if cannot do, do not interfere. It is better to do nothing than to do it. Never speak a word against any sincere. If you have one serve it, but without harming the servants of different conceptions.

Religion in one sense is a means of satisfying the hunger of the soul for attaining a status which is free from the stripes and strains of the mundane existence and there is no reason for quarrel if people of different traditions make efforts for satisfying this hunger in their own different ways.

The etymology of the word ‘religion’ indicates that religion

is there to bind men together in one thread of brotherhood, but the actual experience has been something different. It has more divided than bound. The following lines of Vivekananda echo as fresh even today as when they were written “Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion. Nothing has made more better enmity between man and man than religion. Nothing has built & more charitable institutions more hospitals for man, and even for animals than religion; nothing has deluged the world more bold than religion. 7 (1961, P/373) It is Braithwaite according to his analysis every religion consists of two things – (1) moral way of life and (2) certain stories. The first is primary and the second is only subsidiary but two are there in every religion. Thus every religion consist mainly of three things (1) certain beliefs, (2) certain practices, (3) certain religious stories.

There cannot be a better way of defining than what Galloway expressed in these lines – “Religion is man’s faith in a power beyond himself where by he seeks to satisfy his emotional hunger in terms of social service”. 9

2. Conclusion

Vivekananda, the jewel of Hindu religion cannot be defined in words, To sum up we can say that Vivekananda followed His Master till he breathed his last in accepting his words and deeds. Wherever he went including Chicago at the Parliament of religions he was given special attention to what he spoke throughout wherever he went. His two words Brothers and Sisters of America gave a thunderous applause which is still haunting image. Never did anyone spoke clearly, about Hinduism and was able to satisfy everyone in the question and answer session. He was a Vedanta and was a great admirer of the true principles of Scientific Vedanta. Unless he was convinced he never believed anything to be true. He even tested His Master and then only became his disciple, he knew that the world was Maya and was a great believer of the Upanishads. To sum up we can say that all religions and all paths call upon their followers to pray to me and the same God. Therefore one should not show disrespect to my religion or religious opinion. Therefore, to be sure, God exist in all human beings. All religions are true and can be realized through all paths. The important thing is to reach the roof. You can reach the roof by wooden or stone stairs or by and by bamboo steps and also by bamboo pole.

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