

Swami Vivekananda And Indian Nationalism

Sudarshan Roy
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
B.N. College, Dhubri

Abstract:

Swami Vivekananda is one of the greatest nationalist and spiritual leaders of our country. His nationalism is based on spiritualism. He witnessed the exploitations based on cruelty by the British and tried to encourage his brothers and sisters of India to enlighten themselves with the divinity and power already in them. The very edifice of Indian nationalism is constructed on the ideal of universal brotherhood. He urged upon them to be spiritually strong enough and cherish the divinity of love and universal brotherhood.

Key words: Gurudeva, Nationalism, Spiritualism, Political, Freedom, Motherland

Introduction:

"At Cape Camorin sitting in Mother Kumari's temple, sitting on the last bit of Indian rock-I hit upon a plan: We are so many sanyasis wandering about, and teaching the people metaphysics—it is all madness. Did not our *Gurudeva* use to say, 'An empty stomach is no good for religion?' We as a nation have lost our individuality and that is the cause of all mischief in India. We have to raise the masses".

This is what Swami Vivekananda has said about the "vision of one India" he had while meditating on the "last bit of Indian rock" (later known as the Narendra Roc Memorial) at Kanyakumari. Moved by the miserable conditions of Indian masses he infused in them the sense of service and self sacrifice towards Motherland India.

"I am an Indian and every Indian is my brother." "The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the pariah Indian is my brother." "The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God, India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age." "The soil of India is my highest heaven; the good of India is my good." These were some of the utterances of the patriotic saint Swami Vivekananda that fostered among Indians a consciousness of their identity as a Nation.

Before we know about the thoughts of Vivekananda on Nationalism, we have to understand his time. It was a ragged, poor India under the rule of British emperor. India was constantly getting looted and the common people of India were getting poorer than ever.

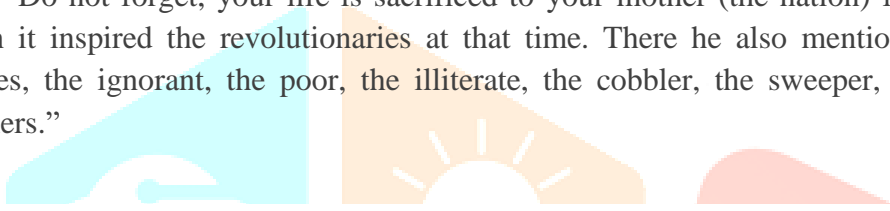
But Vivekananda saw the power of these downtrodden people very differently. He saw that our lives were very simple and our beliefs towards almighty always generated a spirit inside from us which had kept us alive and fresh in many ways. Vivekananda emphasized on these parts where at times when you are being continuously tortured, at least your mind should be strong enough to tolerate it. Just not tolerating but being ahead of the people who are engrossed towards materialistic bonuses.

Vivekananda's nationalism is identified with spiritualism. The meaning of spirituality is the manifestation of the divinity already in a person. The fall of a country or culture is caused by its spiritual bankruptcy. In the same way, its rise depends upon spiritual awakening. Spiritual fall brings in its wake moral fall, moral fall brings intellectual blindness, and intellectual blindness brings material downfall.

Swami Vivekananda linked India's regeneration to her age-old tradition and spiritual goal. He was of the opinion that, "Each nation has a destiny to fulfil, each nation has a message to deliver, each nation has a mission to accomplish. Therefore we must have to understand the mission of our own race, the destiny it has to fulfil, the place it has to occupy in the march of nations, the role which it has to contribute to the harmony of races". His nationalism is based on Humanism and Universalism, the two cardinal features of Indian spiritual culture. He taught people to get rid first of self inflicted bondages and resultant miseries.

As Vivekananda's nationalism based on spiritualism, it never opened the path of materialism that may lead to the collapse of national unity and integrity. Spiritual bondage is the source of strength of Indian life and culture. The very edifice of Indian nationalism is constructed on the ideal of universal brotherhood that he manifested at the World Conference of Religion in America. He reiterated Hinduism and its call for universal brotherhood. Deep concern for masses, freedom and equality through which one expresses self, spiritual integration of the world on the basis of universal brotherhood and "Karmyoga" a system of ethics to attain freedom both political and spiritual through selfless service make the basis of his nationalism.

Vivekananda's nation was the nation of people and their minds, their hearts. In his Swadesh Mantra he said, "Do not forget, your life is sacrificed to your mother (the nation) from birth." Now just think how much it inspired the revolutionaries at that time. There he also mentioned, "Forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are your flesh and blood, your brothers."



Swami Vivekananda held distinct views on Indian nationalism and freedom. He took an ethical or spiritual view towards freedom. Swami was quite direct in criticizing the Christian missionaries who took to proselytizing Indians without a full understanding of the social and material conditions that plagued them. When Swami says, "One cannot worship or meditate on an empty stomach," it is a statement about how external imposition fails to understand conditions of being. Swami made a distinct case towards embracing the Hinduism that was intrinsic to India. Rather than seeing it as a form of paganism or something that was demonized in many aspects of the West, Swami reverted back to this tradition in advocating a unique form of nationalist identity. Swami spoke of the Advaita Vedanta within Hinduism, the oneness of spiritual identity. When Swami speaks of Hinduism, he articulates a vision that is universal in its reach. It pulls into it the basis of all the Western religious expressions, including Christianity. It is in this point where Swami takes a very distinct approach to what defines nationalism and freedom. Swami pivots towards indigenous religious expression in making a humanist argument against one religious form of the good dominating another.

Swami viewed political freedom as coming from a spiritual understanding of being in the world. Individuals could not find political freedom and nationalist identity unless there was a firm spiritual foundation from which such ideals could be revered. Swami defined nationalism and freedom as arising from an understanding of self that stresses universality of religious experience. From this point, there could be no spiritual or ethical justification for one nation occupying another. Accordingly, political freedom arises from spiritual awakening.

Thus, Swami Vivekananda's nationalism is solely based on spiritualism. To him, political freedom also comes from a spiritual understanding of being in the world. Swamiji defined nationalism and freedom as arising from an understanding of self that stresses universality of religious experience.

References:

1. Ms. Alkesh Tyagi is Dy. Director (M&C) PIB New Delhi (<https://pib.gov.in/newsite/printrelease.aspx?relid=114532>)
2. <https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-views-of-Swami-Vivekananda-on-nationalism>
3. Introduction to” VIVEKANANDA, WORLD TEACHER: His Teachings on the Spiritual Unity of Humankind”, Edited and with an Introduction by Swami Adiswarananda.
4. <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/vivekanandas-views-nationalism-freedom-459244>
5. Dutta, Tapash Sankar (1982): *A Study of The Philisophy of Vivekananda*, Sribhumi Publishing Company, Calcutta
6. Lokeswarananda, Swami (ed.). (1988) Chintanayak Vivekananda, Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata
7. Dutta, Harsha (ed.). (2013). *Desh*, A fortnightly Bangla Magazine, 80 Varsha, no. 5, Ananda Publishers Private Limited, Kolkata

