

Debprasad Mandal

G.M.S.M. Mahavidyalaya

## **Swami Vivekananda: The Great Social Reformer**

### **1. Introduction**

Swami Vivekananda was a spiritual mentor to all nation and civilization. He was a multi faceted personality incarnated with a mind broad as the sky, deep as the ocean and pure as a crystal. He gave a social and scientific dimension to religion which he considered the *summum bonum* of all the religion. Swami Vivekananda created a national consciousness amongst all Indians. Swamiji interpreted the significance of Indians ancient culture in the modern world. He travelled to different parts of the country and wherever he went, he loved and identified himself with the people of theft region. He was the symbol of national unity. He was a great social reformer.

### **2. Social reforms of Swami Vivekananda**

Swami Vivekananda was a great social reformer. He has done many social activities to change the social problems. He felt that the three problems are the resistance of our progress. Those are education, poverty and castism.

#### **2. 1. Message for the downtrodden and masses**

Swamiji was the first leader in modern India to speak for the poor and the downtrodden masses (CWSV VII 358). He travelled extensively within the country to understand their problem. He firmly believed that the main cause of Indians' downfall was the neglect exploitation of the poor (*Letters* 40). He spoke about the basic necessities of life such as food, clothes and shelter for the Indian poor. He believed that solution of this would be to make Indians learn modern methods of agriculture and cottage industry.

## **2. 2. Self reliance is our goal**

People need self-confidence. Vivekananda used to say, “He is an atheist who does not believe in himself”(CWSV V 223). He boosted the confidence of people by saying “All power is within you; you can do anything and everything. Believe in that; do not believe that you are weak”(CWSV II 197 - 198). It is very necessary in modern time. But the difficulty seems to be that we are losing faith ourselves day by day.

## **2. 3. Swamiji a great patriot**

Swami Vivekananda was a great patriot who dedicated his life in the service of his motherland. But he did not allow his love for India to limit his love for humanity. He loved and treated all human beings as equal without any distinction of caste, religion, race, nationality or gender.

## **2. 4. What is truereligion?**

“Religion is the manifestation of divinity already in man” (*Letters 70*). According to Vivekananda religion is that will be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic and equally conducive to action. Religion is a social institution; worship is a social activity and faith a social force. Swamiji changed the focus of religion from God to Man on rather, to God in man(CWSV VI 244).His master Sri Ramkrishna had taught him that service to man was service to God. Swamiji made this principle the basis of his social service programme. He taught that the best form of worship was to see God in the poor, the downtrodden, the sick and the ignorant and to serve them.

## **2. 5. Swamiji enhanced Indian prestige all over world**

Swamiji enhanced Indian prestige in the world through his speeches at the world parliament of Religion held in Chicago in 1893 and his subsequent work in America and

England. Swamiji showed the universal relevance and significance of Indians ancient philosophy and spiritual culture in solving many of the problems associated with modern living. He enabled thousands of people in the west to appreciate Indian philosophy and culture.

## **2. 6. Socio Economic Change through education**

Swami Vivekananda did not believe in abrupt changes in society. He believed that socio economic change can be brought about through education. He wanted both moral and secular education to be imparted to the common man of this country. He established the Ramkrishna Mission in 1897 to what he described as creating “machinery which will bring noblest ideas to the doorstep of even the poorest and the meanest”(CWSV II 171).Swamiji laid the foundation for harmony amongst religions and also harmony between religion and science. His Guru’s message of harmony of religion: “Yato Mat Tato Path” (As many faiths, so many paths).

## **2. 7. Vivekananda’s conviction for youth**

Vivekananda had a firm conviction that for the youth, life is larger than livelihood. Their aim is to break the shackles of the established society to revolt against whatever breeds inequality, injustice, bondage of mind and all kinds of backwardness. Vivekananda welcomed the youth to come forward and join in the struggle for achieving freedom of all kinds, political, economic and spiritual. He felt that because the youth had no possession, they could be sincere and dedicated souls. They can sacrifice everything for a noble cause. Vivekananda said, “My faith is in the younger generation, the modern generation, out of them will come my workers, they will workout the whole problem like lions.”

History supports the conviction of Vivekananda. The Sedition Committee Report prepared by the British Government shows that of the revolutionaries who took part in the

struggle for freedom during the Swadeshi days, 85% belong to the age group 16-30. Coming to recent events we see that it was the youth community which took leadership in the student revolt in France, around 1968 in the cultural revolution in China, in lodging protest against the Vietnam War waged by America, War of Liberation in Bangladesh, the Naxalite Movement in Bengal and similar other movements.

## **2. 8. What is the ideal society; according to Vivekananda?**

He says “If it is possible to form a state in which the knowledge of the priest, the culture of the Military, the distributive spirit of the commercial, and the ideal of equality of the labourer can all kept intact, minus their evils, it will be an ideal state.” According to Vivekananda, ignorance inequality and greed are the three main causes of human misery.

## **2. 9. Class division of our society**

Vivekananda was a keen student of History. Analyzing the historical facts available he comes to the conclusion that four fundamental social forces are ruling society in succession: Knowledge, military power, wealth and physical labour. These forces are in the hand of four classes, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. After analysing the merits and defects of the three different kinds of rules Vivekananda prophesied that Sudra rule is bound to come in the near future: nobody can resist it. At the same time he predicted that during the Sudra rule, there will be spread of general education but the number of geniuses on talented people will be few. From the angle of vision, it may be said that in comparison Vaisya rule is better than the other three because during this rule contact between people of our country and another was made possible through commerce and trade. History shows that Sudras were condemned in society in different periods. They were deprived of all opportunities to receive education. If a Sudra is absorbed in a higher class he will be lost to his own community and may not feel any urge necessary uplift of his own community.

## **2. 10. Stirring utterances**

“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.” According to Vivekananda, “Man making is my mission.” “Woman must put in a position to solve their own way; no one ought to do this for them. And our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world.”...Men should be taught to be practical and physically strong. A dozen of such lion will conquer the world and not millions of sheep can do so. Secondly, men should not be taught to imitate a personal ideal however great.” “The ideal of perfect womanhood is total independence. The central idea of the life of modern Hindu lady has chastity.” A soul has no male / female difference. Avoid the difference of male and female and feel that all are soul and they are the parts of God. The only way is love and sympathy. The only worship is love (CWSV VIII 331).

## **2. 11. Neglect of womenfolk**

In India there are two great evils. Trampling of the women, and grinding the poor through the caste restrictions (*Letters* 207).Manu, again, has said that God blessed those families women are happy and well treated. In western countries treat these women as well as can be desired and hence they are so prosperous, so learned so free and so energetic. But we have seen the opposite picture in our country, what is that our country is the weakest and the most backward of all countries (*Letters* 61). Because Shakti is held in dishonor there. All nations have attained greatness by paying proper respect to women. That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great. Their education must be an eye-opener in all matters. The noble examples of Sita, Sabitri, Danayanti, Lilabati, Khanashought be brought home to their minds and they should be inspired to mould their own lives in the light of these(CWSV VI 493 - 494). Religion, art, science, housekeeping,

cooking, sewing hygiene - the simple essential points in these subjects ought to be taught to our women.

## **2. 12. Education, the Panacea**

Education is the manifestation of perfection; already in man (*Letters 70*). Is it book learning? No, is it diverse knowledge? Not even that, his basic thesis is nobody can learn anything to anybody. Teacher will be a guide. A student learnt himself from his own capacity the basic aim of my education is to create an ideal man. Swamiji said that “Let nature be the teacher.” Swamiji want to solve the problem of woman by their self help and mutual aid. According to Swamiji the curriculum of woman will be religion, literature, Sanskrit, Grammar and English also. Swamiji wanted extension service. According to Sister Cristina, “The education plan of Swamiji is to create a new society and new teachers group.” Swamiji advised that learnt that natural language of the man. He felt that Sanskrit language is most necessary for the progress of our country. He said that “The greatness of a teacher consists in the simplicity of his language”(CWSV V 259). He always said that education is development of humanity. First bread and then religion. I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No negative only positive education. We want that education by which character is formed. Strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one’s own facts(CWSV V 342).

## **2. 13. Swamiji and National integration**

National integration and Swami Vivekananda: India is a country and Indian is a nation this feeling is national integration. Vivekananda feel that the main characteristics of Indian culture are unity among diversity. Race, religion, language, Government - all these together make a nation (*CWSV VI 415*). In India race difficulties, linguistic difficulties, social

difficulties, national difficulties, all melt away before this unifying power of religion. Indian mind there is nothing higher than religion, deals that is the key note of Indian life. The Christian is not become a Hindu or a Buddhist nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian, But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. Sect must be but sectarianism needs not (CWSV III 137). If there is the darkness of centuries in room and we go into the room and began to cry “Oh, it is dark, it is dark!” will the darkness go? Bring in the light and the darkness will vanish at once (CWSV III 383).

## **2. 14. Relevance of Swamiji in present time**

Swami Vivekananda’s message of nationality and universality is very much relevant in the present day world. All people without any distinction of caste, religion, race, gender on nationality. Human society has to wait for centuries for the advent of a leader of mankind like Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji was very relevant during his time. He is more relevant today and he will remain still more relevant in the years to come and till the human civilization exists. His message for the present moment is that, we are going forward our true destination in spite of some appearances to the country. “India will be raised, not with the power of the flesh, but with the power of the spirit; not with the flag of destruction, but with the flag of peace and love... say not that you are weak (CWSV II 203). The spirit is omnipotent. Lastly we say, according to Swamiji “All expansion is life, all contraction is death. All love is expansions, all selfishness is contraction. Love is therefore the only law of life. He who loves lives, he who is selfish is dying. Therefore love for loves sake, because it is the only law of life, just as you breathe to live (CWSV VIII 331).

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