

Swami Vivekananda: A Writer with Poet's Eye and Prophet's Imagination

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Abstract – Swami Vivekananda is generally known as a prophet, a saint, a patriot, an immense lover of humanity, a great spiritual and religious leader and a heart winning orator. Very few know about his literary expressions, chiefly the poems composed by him. We cannot call him literary figure in general sense. Most of the Indian saints while giving their message to the world have produced the poetry of the highest order. None among these were the poets or the literary figures. These were the heavenly spirits and saints showing right path giving heavenly message to the society. Still whatever they have produced in the form of their message or writing has become the great literary treasure. Same is the case with Swami Vivekananda whatever he spontaneously expressed in the form of his poems has become the very expression of his soul, personality and his life giving message. Most of the poems of Vivekananda indicate his high ecstatic state, personal experiences, concerns, prophetic outlook, patriotic and spiritual view point in which they are shaped.

Key Words: Swami Vivekananda, Humanism, Philosophy, Optimism, Poet, Patriotic

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INTRODUCTION

(In Search of God and Other Poems 7)

Vivekananda has spontaneously shown his yearning for God in his poems. The presence of God, which he felt in himself, in everybody, has appeared in his poems. The reader might not have undergone through the spiritual experiences like the poet, still his poems enable the reader to give an outline of these spiritual pleasures. From his poems he has tried to explain the viewpoint from Indian Vedas in simple words. He tried to explain the philosophy, culture, religion, customs, intricate mythology and Advaita Vedanta in easy, simple and artistic way through his poems. His poems put forward the abstract Advaita in lively poetic way. It uncovers the intricate mythology to bring out concrete moral forms out of it. It carries reader to the world of beauty and spirituality. His poems have the ability to reveal the spiritual viewpoint in artistic way. He saw it with a poet's soul and opened the unending world of spirituality, meditation and religiousness to the common man. His poems are sweet blend of philosophy, beauty and divinity mingled together.

"From dreams awake, from bonds be free!

Be not afraid. This mystery

My shadow cannot frighten me!

Know once for all that I am he!

Spiritual Perception in Writing:

As an artist or a poet, he always put emphasis on the value of spiritual perception in viewing the things. He was a person with mediation powers. He was able to undergo smallest experiences of life and touch the ordinary things or the purely human elements of life with extra ordinary sensibility. He had ability to interpret everything under the light of spirituality. His poems are nothing but the worldly expression of his physical experiences translated into spiritual terms. As one of his disciple's remarks:

He was ascetic and artist in one. He never merged his nature in physical experiences, he was constantly the witness, the poet, the great dreamer who meditated on the phenomena of experience and saw the spiritual even in the physical, art and language were, to his mind, so many methods for the re-interpretation of physical nature, so that the spirit stood, in the revelation, superior to the form. (His Eastern and Western Disciplines 43)

Strong Optimistic Views:

Vivekananda holds strong optimistic view in life. He was the soul trying to see positivism in each and every little thing of the world. As a poet also most of the poems of Vivekananda underline strong optimism

of Vivekananda. He tries to put it in a practical way. He asks us to believe in ourselves. If we want material wealth, work it out, it will come to us. If we want to become an intellectual, he asks us to work it out on the intellectual plane, and intellectual giants we shall be. If we want to attain freedom, the poet asks us to work it out on the spiritual plane and free we shall be, and shall enter into Nirvana the Eternal Bliss. But for all this according to Vivekananda positive and optimistic attitude is necessary. Optimism will act as supreme power in achieving whatever we want.

He always tried to inspire his disciples with the feeling of optimism. As a poet he used similes and metaphors to express the feeling of optimism in his poems. He knew that path of life is filled with many tensions and problems. One can feel defeated while moving through it. But it does not mean that one should stop walking, due to the fear of problems. The poet thinks that God has given particular task to everyone. The task assigned to us might not have any joy and grace still we have to complete it because it is not meant for any other hands. Everyone has been given place in the universe created by God. One may feel tired or lost in the way of reaching his goal. In those circumstances one has to remember God closing his eyes. One could feel that the God is also with him in his sincere efforts to complete the difficult job assigned to him. But in any circumstances he should not move back and run away from the problems of the life. The poet believed that God is always there to lead human beings during problematic situations in life. As in the poem light he says:

I look behind and after

And find that all is right.

In my deepest sorrows

There is a soul of light.

(*In Search of God and Other Poems* 34)

A Patriot in True Sense:

Vivekananda was a patriot in true sense. His poems upheld his patriotic view in prominent way. His poetry gives the true reflection of his patriotic spirit and love for freedom in most appropriate way. He tried to rouse Indians from their prolonged sleep. He explained the soul of India to her own children. He wanted to make them aware with the glorious past of India. He acquainted them with the message of ancient India and its significance for the future. He tried to break the age long sleep of Indians and lead them towards the future. He believed that India has capacity to spiritualize the whole world. That's why Swamiji tried to educate the Indian masses with the Great Spirit of India. He worked to make his men free from the suffering and miseries he did not view Indian freedom with the eyes of a politician. He saw and dreamt for the every Indian to be free from his sufferings and miseries. He dreamt for the welfare of the masses. In

his feeling of patriotisms and freedom there was no any place for distrust, hatred and discrimination. He knew that once people become aware of their strength and spiritual greatness, no one could stop India from becoming a free nation. As Shri Aurobindo says:

We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intuitive, up heaving that has entered the soul of India and we say behold Vivekananda still lives in his Mother and the souls of her children. (Swami Lokeshwarananda 19)

Telling the meaning of true Indian Swamiji always put emphasis on the fact that true Indian is one; who knows greatness of his land, its culture, its beauty, its oneness, its potential, and its realities. He is the one who has made himself useful in its cause, who feels himself one with the millions, and make their suffering, their joys and their aspirations his very own, who is proud of his birth in India and whose country is his God and who feels India at the center of his heart. Vivekananda's great love and sense of responsibility towards India is also visible in his poems.

Awake arise and dream no more!

This is the land of dreams where karma weaves

Unthreaded garlands with our thoughts

of flowers sweet or noxious and none.

(*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 4: 388)

Vivekananda and His Humanism:

Vivekananda's humanism was based on universal Vedanta vision of 'man' and 'Atman'. He has inherited this vision from the Indian Vedas and Sages. When we take a quick look of India's five Thousand years long history we come to know that, India has never gone outside her boundaries to conquer the foreign land or to enslave other nations. This was not because she didn't have enough military or political power to do so. Even if she had political, economic and military power to do so she never stepped beyond her boundaries to conquer other. It was the fruit of her age long philosophy and teaching which evaluates man as man, which tries to see every human being above from the boundaries of race, creed, religion, caste or political minority.

Humanism in his poetry is based on the man as an individual soul. He dealt with the freedom and dignity of each individual soul. He started a mission for the poor, ignorant and oppressed to bring them to the level of humanity and equality. He devoted his life for the redemption of the masses who were suffering from the age long oppression. The spirit of

his workings and devotion which was very soul of his humanism is clearly visible in his poems. This was like the medium of expression for his love, respect, dignity, and feeling of equality to the every individual living on this earth. His main concern was welfare and glory of the human being and it always comes at the center in most of the poems and other works of Vivekananda.

Vivekananda and His Philosophy:

The philosophy highlighted in the poems of Vivekananda is influenced by great Indian civilization and its true values. Man has attained glorious success with the help of science and technology. He has conquered moon and is planning to step on the Mars. Man can control his behavior and bring discipline in his life with the help of knowledge. The knowledge of physical science, economics, politics and other such subjects makes him civil and brings him to the civilized level. But still these civilities control the external behavior. Power of knowledge cannot control his inner psyche. Einstein says, 'Science can denature plutonium but it cannot denature evil in the heart of man'. (qtd. In Swami Ranganathananda 83) Science cannot give man enough power and force to handle the tensions of civilized state and the fear of destruction of himself and his own civilization. Recognizing this insufficiency of the external approach to reveal the truth of the internal nature of the man, Vivekananda put forward the philosophy of Indian Vedas and Sages, through his poems. Complete welfare of man always remains at the center of Indian Vedanta Philosophy. It tried to investigate the internal nature of man. It teaches to the world not only to control the external behavior but also to control the inner psyche of human beings. Vivekananda dealt with these subjects brilliantly through his poems. One can give condensed presentation of philosophy in his poems from these beautiful lines taken from the poem *Renunciation Alone Is Fearless*:

In enjoyment is the fear of disease

In high birth, the fear of losing caste,

In wealth, the fear of tyrants,

In honor, the fear of losing it,

In strength, the fear of enemies,

In beauty, the fear of old age,

In knowledge, the fear of defeat,

In virtue, the fear of scandal,

In the body, the fear of death,

In this life all is fraught with fear,

Renunciation alone is fearless.

(*In Search of God and Other Poems* 81)

CONCLUSION:

Art and poetry entered into Swamiji's philosophy and life-giving message. He has ability to show the inter-relationship of spirituality, Advaita Vedanta, religion, history, humanism, patriotism, unity of human, nature and divine in most simple and easy words. He was firm with his own conclusions. Swami Vivekananda was poetically in love with truth. To read his poems and understand their themes require no preliminary schooling in logic or philosophy. They stand on his experiences, which he gathered from the visible universe and natural urge to worship and serve the God who is residing in the soul of common people. It was all living fact to him and not fancy. It was realization, not speculation. Though his poetry outwardly seems the embodiment his spiritual, religious, patriotic, philosophical, optimistic and philosophical point of view but above and beyond this, his poetry comes to us as the personal experience of the Divine Life, with poet's eye and prophet's imagination! To conclude in Swami Vivekananda's own words:

Poetic suggestion is the highest poetry. There should not be too much detail in depicting of an ideal. The poet gives a few touches of an ideal at its highest glimpse. A poem should act as a stimulus. Flooding the heart and mind with light, waking up a sea of emotions. (His Eastern and Western Disciplines 55)

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