

Importance of 'Karma' As Suggested by Swami Vivekananda

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Abstract – In 1880 Narendra joined Keshab Chandra Sen's Nava Vidhan, which was established by Sen after meeting Ramakrishna and reconverting from Christianity to Hinduism. Narendra became a member of a Freemasonry lodge "at some point before 1884" and of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj in his twenties, a breakaway faction of the Brahmo Samaj led by Keshab Chandra Sen and Debendranath Tagore.

From 1881 to 1884 he was also active in Sen's Band of Hope, which tried to discourage youths from smoking and drinking.

It was in this cultic milieu that Narendra became acquainted with Western esotericism. His initial beliefs were shaped by Brahmo concepts, which included belief in a formless God and the deprecation of idolatry and a "streamlined, rationalized, monotheistic theology strongly coloured by a selective and modernistic reading of the Upanisads and of the Vedanta."

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INTRODUCTION

Rammohan Roy, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj who was strongly influenced by unitarianism, strived toward an universalistic interpretation of Hinduism. His ideas were "altered [...] considerably" by Debendranath Tagore, who had a romantic approach to the development of these new doctrines, and questioned central Hindu beliefs like reincarnation and karma, and rejected the authority of the Vedas.

The same search for direct intuition and understanding can be seen with Vivekananda. Not satisfied with his knowledge of philosophy, Narendra came to "the question which marked the real beginning of his intellectual quest for God." He asked several prominent Calcutta residents if they had come "face to face with God", but none of their answers satisfied him.

At this time, Narendra met Debendranath Tagore (the leader of Brahmo Samaj) and asked if he had seen God. Instead of answering his question, Tagore said "My boy, you have the Yogi's eyes."

According to Banhatti, it was Ramakrishna who really answered Narendra's question, by saying "Yes, I see Him as I see you, only in an infinitely intenser sense." Nevertheless, Vivekananda was more influenced by the Brahmo Samaj's and its new ideas, than by Ramakrishna. It was Sen's influence who brought Vivekananda fully into contact with western

esotericism, and it was also via Sen that he met Ramakrishna.

Vivekananda propagated that the essence of Hinduism was best expressed in Adi Shankara's Advaita Vedanta philosophy. Nevertheless, following Ramakrishna, and in contrast to Advaita Vedanta, Vivekananda believed that the Absolute is both immanent and transcendent.

According to Anil Sooklal, Vivekananda's neo-Advaita "reconciles Dvaita or dualism and Advaita or non-dualism". Vivekananda summarised the Vedanta as follows, giving it a modern and Universalistic interpretation: Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or mental discipline, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.

PHILOSOPHY OF 'KARMA' WITH A REFERENCE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Natural obstacles provide a different sort of limitation. It might be absurd for de Beauvoir to persist with sailing if she vomits constantly, but giving up on her goals because of seasickness is stupid, too. Sometimes, we don't have the power to

break our chains, and we fail in our projects, but resignation is not the answer.

To transcend is to recognize our resistances and failures, and to rebel against them creatively. This perspective matters because it emphasizes that, while there are fixed elements to our being, we are not fixed beings, since we are (or ought to be) free to choose our projects. Neither biology nor natural obstacles limit our futures to a great extent, and how we live out our human nature will vary because we give different meanings to our facts.

An authentic life is about acknowledging these differences, and stretching ourselves into an open future. It does not follow that this openness is unlimited or unconstrained. We are limited, but mostly by our own imagination.

Death and its concept are absolutely empty. No picture comes to mind. The concept of death has a use for the living, while death itself has no use for anything. All we can say about death is that it is either real or it is not real. If it is real, then the end of one's life is a simple termination. If it is not real, then the end of one's embodied life is not true death, but a portal to another life.

Having no content, we must speak of death metaphorically. For those who think death is real, death is a blank wall. For those who think it is not real, death is a door to another life. Whether we think of death as a wall or a door, we cannot avoid using one metaphor or another. We often say that a person who dies is relieved of suffering. However, if death is real, then it is metaphorical even to say that the dead do not suffer, as though something of them remains not to suffer. As there are already many speculations about some sort of 'next life,' I will focus on the view that death is real and marks the final end of an individual's life.

The concept of death is unlike most other concepts. Usually we have an object and the concept of that object. For example, we have a horse and the concept of a horse. However, the concept of death is absolutely without any object whatsoever. Thinking about the prospect of one's own death is a constant meditation upon our own ignorance. There is no method for getting to know death better, because death cannot be known at all.

DISCUSSION

One trouble with discussing this topic is the instinctive fear of death. We tend to avoid death in our thoughts and actions. However, if we could forget our fears for a minute, we could see more clearly how interesting the concept actually is from a more detached point of view.

Birth and death are the bookends of our lives. Living towards death in time gives one's life a direction and

framework within which to understand the changes that life brings. The world looks very differently to the young and the old. The young look forward. The old look back. What matters to us changes as we get older. The prospect of death informs these changes. The young have an intellectual understanding that death comes to us all, but their mortality has not become real to them. For the old, mortality starts to sink in.

For a long time, I have been puzzled by two famous philosophical ideas about death, one from Plato and one from Spinoza. The first is that a philosopher has a vital concern with death and constantly meditates upon it. The second is that the wise person thinks of nothing so little as death. Perhaps the truth is somewhere in the middle. Ignoring death leaves us with a false sense of life's permanence and perhaps encourages us to lose ourselves in the minutiae of daily of life. Obsessive rumination on death, on the other hand, can lead us away from life. Honestly coming to terms with one's death involves reflection on its significance in one's life, and thinking about the larger values that give life its meaning. In the end, it is useful to think about death only to the point that it frees us to live fully immersed in the life we have yet to live.

Ajñāna was one of the nāstika or "heterodox" schools of ancient Indian philosophy, and the ancient school of radical Indian skepticism. It was a Śramaṇa movement and a major rival of early Buddhism and Jainism. They have been recorded in Buddhist and Jain texts. They held that it was impossible to obtain knowledge of metaphysical nature or ascertain the truth value of philosophical propositions; and even if knowledge was possible, it was useless and disadvantageous for final salvation. They were sophists who specialized in refutation without propagating any positive doctrine of their own.

Buddhist philosophy is a system of thought which started with the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, or "awakened one". Buddhism is founded on elements of the Śramaṇa movement, which flowered in the first half of the 1st millennium BCE, but its foundations contain novel ideas not found or accepted by other Sramana movements. Buddhism and Hinduism mutually influenced each other and shared many concepts, states Paul Williams, however it is now difficult to identify and describe these influences. Buddhism rejected the Vedic concepts of Brahman (ultimate reality) and Atman (soul, self) at the foundation of Hindu philosophies.

Original scriptures of the Ājīvika school of philosophy may once have existed, but these are currently unavailable and probably lost. Their theories are extracted from mentions of Ajivikas in the secondary sources of ancient Indian literature, particularly those of Jainism and Buddhism which polemically criticized the Ajivikas. The Ājīvika

school is known for its *Niyati* doctrine of absolute determinism (fate), the premise that there is no free will, that everything that has happened, is happening and will happen is entirely preordained and a function of cosmic principles.

CONCLUSION

Nationalism was a prominent theme in Vivekananda's thought. He believed that a country's future depends on its people, and his teachings focused on human development. He wanted "to set in motion a machinery which will bring noblest ideas to the doorstep of even the poorest and the meanest".

Vivekananda linked morality with control of the mind, seeing truth, purity and unselfishness as traits which strengthened it. He advised his followers to be holy, unselfish and to have *shraddhā* (faith). Vivekananda supported *brahmacharya*, believing it the source of his physical and mental stamina and eloquence. He emphasised that success was an outcome of focused thought and action; in his lectures on Raja Yoga he said, "Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life – think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, that is the way great spiritual giants are produced"

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