



Swami Vivekananda: A true revolutionary

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Abstract

Most revolutionaries are remembered for one particular revolution. Lenin is known for communist revolution in Russia, George Washington is known for American Revolution against British Rule. But there are few historical figures, which affected multiple revolutions. Swami Vivekananda is one such multifaceted revolutionary who revolutionized Indian monasticism and did more than any other to forge India's concept of itself as a single entity.

In this research paper I would like to evaluate those ideas of Swami Vivekananda which have revolutionised the humanity. Modern youth can attain their goal easily by following the path prescribed by Swami Vivekananda. Our educational institution can become hub of true knowledge if they will give emphasis on character building education. Our religious leaders can learn lesson from his teachings that religion unites and not divides. Modern generations can protect themselves from deadly diseases by practicing Yoga. Swami Vivekananda had revolutionized our life through his ideas. Need of the hour is that people should sincerely follow the path prescribed by him.

Keywords: Swami Vivekananda, humanity

Introduction

It is a matter of pride that we belong to a nation which is one of the oldest civilizations of the world. It has spanned a period of more than 4000 years and witnessed the fusion of several customs and traditions. These traditions are reflective of the rich culture and heritage of the country. It is the long history behind its remarkable progress. This progress was the contribution of great men who came with special mission on this holy land known as India all over the world.

Henry Becher writes about these great men,

“The great men of the earth are shadow men who having lived and died. Now live again and forever through their undying thoughts. Thus living, though their footfalls are heard no more, their voices are louder than the thunder and unceasing as the flow of tides and air.”(Izquotes.com)

It gives us immense pleasure that a great human soul Swami Vivekananda with great mission took birth on this holy land who revolutionised the world through his own way. He had come to this earth on 12 January 1863 to take away the sorrows of mankind. When everything seems hopeless and the people lost all confidence in themselves, the spirit like Swami Vivekananda could come at this crucial time. It has also been indicated in Geeta that whenever righteousness is on the decline and unrighteousness is in the ascendant God creates himself as an avatar or incarnation, as a leader to guide men to the right path of salvation. Swami Vivekananda was appointed as a leader for the welfare of whole humanity. It was time of 19th century, when there was dire need of a leader like him. The world was passing through a difficult phase at that time and people were losing confidence among themselves. It was a crucial time when he was born in aristocratic Bengali Datta

family of Calcutta. Proud parents were Sh. Vishawnath Datta and Bhuvneshvari Devi. He was influenced by the religious and spiritual nature of his mother. He learned value of self-control from his mother. His father's rational and practical way of thinking had also contributed a lot in his life.

Brought up and educated in 19th century in Calcutta, Vivekananda was introduced at an early age to the principles of western thinking. It taught that one should not accept anything without evidence. He was a brilliant student and was well versed in history, philosophy, literature and contemporary western thought.

Prof. Hastie (Principal of college) said about him,

“Naren is a real genius. I have travelled far and wide but, yet have not come across a lead of his talents and possibilities even among the philosophical students in German universities. He is bound to make his mark in life.” (www.truecolorsoflife.com)

Swami Vivekananda is one of the most admired spiritual leaders of India. The world knows him as an inspiring Hindu monk, his motherland regards him as the patriot saint of modern India and Hindus consider him as a source of spiritual powers, mental energy, strength giving and open mindedness. God sent him on this Earth for the protection of the downtrodden. He never swerved an inch from his purpose. He revolutionised the whole nation with his teachings and messages. He was the great ambassador of God to this blue planet especially for his motherland. It is indeed a purifying exercise and emerging experiences to go through the unbiased and unprejudiced teachings of Swami Vivekananda.

There was tsunami of ideas in his mind. He won the heart of millions with his honest, assiduous and determined manners.

He was a true revolutionary who wanted to see his motherland on the top. Sister Nivedita wrote as regards his love for his motherland,

“India throbbed in his breast, India beats in his pulses, India was his day dream, and India was his nightmare.... He himself became India. He was the embodiment of India in flesh and blood. He was India. He was Bharat—the very symbol of his spirituality, her purity, her wisdom, her power, her vision and her destiny” (Swami Shuddhidananda, “Vivekananda as The Turning Point”, p.78)

The peculiar thing about Swami Vivekananda is this that he saw the world around him in his own way and wished to represent it. He had many qualities that made him a perennial favourite among a cross section of readers – Men, Women and Youth. And which remains new with every read, year after year with all thoughts and messages for humanity. These thoughts are still relevant for discussion. He was the master of the words. One can get fresh energy after reading his beautiful and enthusiastic writings. He discovered many new ideas in his life. He brought revolution in our life through his each and every word. S.P. Sabharwal is right when he comments,

“Bloodshed is not only a means of revolution. There were some great souls who brought revolution through their thoughts in the society” (S.P. Sabharwal, “History of Modern India” p. 238)

Revolution through yoga and spiritualism

Swami Vivekananda was a deeply learned man. He awakened the minds of Indians to this glorious heritage and infused self-confidence and positive outlook in them. He was the first spiritual leader in modern India to speak for the poor masses. His teachings are for all the people without discrimination. Those who met Vivekananda and even those who heard him, their life got transformed. Swami Tejasanand writes,

“Swami Vivekananda occupies a unique place in the shining galaxy of the illustrious sons of modern India.” (S. P. Sabharwal, ‘History of Modern India’ p.236.)

Every Indian will be indebted to him for the advice that came from him as the outcome of his knowledge and spiritual experience. He had accomplished his mission in a short span of life whose influence would last for many centuries. Though he lived a short life yet he created spiritual upheaval. Some of it obvious, some of it not-awakening people from spiritual torpor so that they could claim their birth right and manifest their inherent divinity. That he did, with an intensity that burned through layers of ignorance, burning out his own health in the process. (Swami Shuddhidananda, “Vivekananda as the Turning Point” p.58)

Swami Vivekananda was very sharp in learning. None could satisfy his doubts about the existence of God. This question troubles him the most. At that time he met Sri Rama Krishna, who was living at the Kali temple of Dakshineswar near Calcutta. His touch gave him a strange experience. The walls and the rooms seemed to whirl round and then vanish. At that

moment he got frightened. He always lost consciousness at the touch of Sri Ramakrishna. Rama Krishna taught him meditation and other spiritual practices. He had wonderful experience during meditation. Sometimes he completely forgets the whole world. Three or four days before his mahasamadhi Sri Ramakrishna transmitted to him his own power and told him:

“By the force of the power transmitted by one, great things will be done by you” (Vivekananda call to the Nation p.6).

He started his mission entrusted to him by his master. His mission was the spiritual, regeneration of India and the world. He is really a great patriot who gave right advice to his countrymen. He wanted to see strong spirit in every India so he advised

“You can reach the God more easily by playing football”

He understands that healthy mind resides in healthy body. He gives emphasis on physical awareness and fitness,

“One need not simply study Geeta but more important is to do their Karma earnestly. Football is also Karma. While playing football one should enjoy the game and not worry about the results.”

However along with physical culture, he harps on the need of paying special attention to the culture of the mind. He advised that mind of the students has to be controlled and trained through meditation, concentration and practice of ethical purity. Power of concentration is always helpful in success of any line of work. He mentions that the chemist in the laboratory concentrates all the powers of his mind and brings them into one focus—the elements to be analysed and finds out their secrets.

Three things are mentioned by Swami Vivekananda which is must for making success in life:

1. Purity, physical and Mental
2. Patience
3. Perseverance

Swami Vivekananda never forgets to talk about each aspect of life. On the one side he gave emphasis on hygienic and on the other side he brought revolution through yoga. He was really a great revolutionary who was talking about the cleanliness of both body and soul. It was due to the efforts of great persons like Swami Vivekananda that today the world has understood the importance of yoga. Recently International Yoga Day was celebrated 21st June. The powerful country like USA was also part of it. Yoga has become so important in modern life that research is being made on this subject.

In views of researchers, during the first half of the 20th century, yoga was construed mainly as a spiritual practice linked to mysticism, magic and asceticism with religio-philosophical underpinnings and an emphasis on Raja Yoga (The mental science) rather than Hatha Yoga (Physical yoga). In 1970s, a more scientific understanding of yoga emerged and it became a viable player in the field of mind body medicine. Researchers said the shift in the meanings was due to the changes in how yoga gurus are trained, market contests

among different meanings and the distinct branding practises of small and big players in the market. Today 20.4 million practice yoga. In 2001, the figures stood at 4.3 million. The USA yoga market has been increasing with yoga enterprises rising from 14058 to 26506 and the number of employers increasing from 58525 to 112890 during 2004-2013 periods. Researchers from Chapman University's Argyros School of Business and Economics has gathered data via archival sources, in depth interviews and observations (The Tribune, 2nd May, 2015)

Swami Vivekananda's revolution at Chicago

It was the terrible poverty and misery of the masses that caused his soul to burn in agony. He meditated on the past, the present, and the future of India. He tried to know the causes of downfall of India and the means of her resurrection. Then he took the decision to go to the West to seek help for the poor people of India. It became the mission of his life. His great compassion for humanity made him declare,

“May I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God that I believe in, the sum total of all souls- and above all, my God the wicked, my God the Miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species is the special object of my worship.”(The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, vol. V p.136)

World parliament of religion

At World Parliament of Religion, which was opened on 11 September, 1893 at Chicago, he received thunderous applause from the vast audience. He was successful to a greatest extent in changing the opinion of western people about India. He raised the image of India to a high pedestal as the land of spirituality, harmony and rich cultural heritage. The simple monk with a begging bowl became the man of the hour. Thousands of men and women heard through him the eternal voice of India. He transformed hundreds of lives and left an indelible impression of his personality. He had gained abiding respect for mother India in American mind. He gave India back its pride and confidence in its own culture. He gave full throated voice and inspired eloquence to the implied message of the parliament. He spread this message to large section of America while all the delegates to the parliament spoke of their own religion. Swami Vivekananda spoke of a religion that was as vast as sky and as deep as ocean. He told the Parliament of Religions,

“I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all, I worship God every one of them, in whatever form they worship him. I shall go to the mosque of Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhist temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his law. I shall go into forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindus, who is trying to see the light which enlightens the heart of everyone.” (www.thekundaliniyoga.org)

Vivekananda was more than the Hindu delegate at World Parliament of Religion. He stood for the ancient Indian

doctrine of the Universality of the Spiritual Truth.

During afternoon when he rose to his feet and began in his deep voice 'Sisters and Brothers of America', the entire audience cheered wildly for the two whole minutes. A large gathering has its own strange kind of subconscious telepathy and this one must had been somehow aware that it was in the presence of that most unusual of all beings, a man whose words express what exactly he is.

Swami Vivekananda burst upon the American society with his message of Vedanta like a bombshell. He had laboured hard to give to the West his message of Vedanta as the universal principle basic to all religions. His mission in the west was to give to the Christians a higher interpretation of their own scriptures; to give to unbelievers a sound foundation for serious investigation; to guide the scientific mind into channels of higher research; to point out to western nations the danger of a materialistic civilisation and to show all men and women the way how to realize their own divinity. And this he did by placing before us and explaining to us the treasures of the Vedas. (Swami Tattwavidananda 'The Universal Vivekananda' pg.293)

After four years of preaching work he returned to his mother land which gave him a hero's welcome. He roused his sleeping nations to the glories of its ancient heritage. His great heart bled at the sufferings of the poor and the ignorant.

His effort by now resulted in the establishment of the Vedanta work on a permanent basis in the United States. (Vivekananda: His Call to the Nation p.15). He left such a great mark that even after 155 years of his birth his thoughts are receiving attention of the powerful leaders of the world. In his visit to India, American President Barrack Obama repeated Vivekananda's words in his speech,

“Holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possession of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character”.

American president also paid homage to this great revolutionary while addressing the Indian Parliament. He started his speech,

“Sisters and Brothers of India”

President remembered those days when Vivekananda visited Chicago,

“A visitor to my hometown of Chicago more than a century ago-the Renowned Swami Vivekananda.”

Revolutionary message for young people of India

Swami Vivekananda travelled on foot and begged from door to door. He visited many temples and spent his time in prolonged meditation and scriptural studies. There was an important objective in his mind. He wanted to gain direct knowledge of his countrymen. He came into contact with people of all strata of life. He was enthralled to discover the wonderful thread of unity that had bound the people of India from centuries. He realised the strength of Indian culture.

Farid Zakaria (The Post - American World) believes that India

has a fine chance of becoming a superpower. He pointed out that India's young population coupled with the second largest English speaking population in the world could give India an advantage. He believes that while other industrial countries will face a youth gap, India will have lots of young people or in other words workers. (N. D. Arora "Political Science" p.35.7)

But we should remember that it can be possible by having a self-confidence and will power among young people of India. Only a quantitative value can't be helpful in this regard. Swami Vivekananda was also dreaming for his motherland many years ago.

'Stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves. (complete works Vol. II p. 225)

Swami Vivekananda felt sorry for the young people of India who have lost faith in themselves. He was impressed from the confidence of the western people,

"An Englishman will tell you, 'I am an Englishman, and I can do anything.' The American boy will tell you the same thing and so will any European boy. Can our boys say the same thing here? No, nor even the boys fathers. We have lost faith in ourselves." (pg. 3)

Vivekananda was also worried,

"Where our faith has gone? Our land is land of great warriors. We should not lose our faith."

He shared his experiences about his journey to America and England so that we can learn lesson from it. He never forgets welcome received from Americans at the Parliament of Religions. He had very good experience of their hospitality,

"Really our thanks are due to the great people of United states, the American nation, the warm hearted, hospitable, great nation of America, where more than anywhere else the feeling of brotherhood has been developed."

He writes that he landed in England with more hatred in his heart but after living among them, he started to love them more than anybody else. While working in England, Vivekananda felt more satisfied than anywhere else. He expressed his feelings in this way,

"The bold, brave and steady young man, if he has once an idea put into his brain, it never comes out and the immense practicality and energy of the race make it sprout up and immediately bear fruit. It is not so in any other country. There is less of imagination and more of work. They are a nation of heroes, they are the true Kshatriyas; their education is to hide their feeling and never to show them. (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, pg.295)

Swami Vivekananda wanted to see every Indian broad minded. He was worried about the causes which led to degeneration of our minds,

"The problem of our life is becoming deeper and broader every day as the world moves on. One action in this universe can't move without dragging the whole world along with it. There can't be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming everyday clearer that solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, national or narrow grounds."(Selections from the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, P. 231)

Vivekananda also suggested our youth in a beautiful way,

"When there is conflict between the heart and the brain, let the heart be followed, because intellect has only one state, reason, and within that, intellect works, and can't get beyond. It is the heart which takes one to the highest plane, which intellect can never reach; it goes beyond intellect, and reaches to what is called inspiration.... Men of heart get the 'butter', and the 'buttermilk', is left for the intellectual. (Vivekananda His Call to the Nation, p.96)

Swami Vivekananda: a revolutionary teacher

There was a time when India was noted all over the world as a glorious centre of education and culture where students from different parts of the globe used to pour in. The educational and cultural centers of Nalanda and Taxila attracted students from different places like Egypt, Greece, China and Indonesia. Today where the quality of education has gone? Education system is suffocating and binding. There are many intellectuals who want to break these barriers and have actually done so.

Swami Vivekananda in his own way revolutionised this world. He did not believe in violent revolution. He believed that all necessary socio-cultural changes could be brought about through education. In his views education is the answer of all the sufferings of our people because education brings faith in one's own self. Vivekananda held that there is need of education which seeks to bring a complete and harmonious development of all factors of human personality. In his views education enables one to comprehend one's self within as the self everywhere. He prepares a scheme of man making education in the light of his overall philosophy of Vedanta. The Vedanta says,

"The greatest error is to say that you are weak, you are sinner, a miserable creature and that you have no power and you can't do this or that. Every time you think in that way, you, as it were, rivet one more link in the chain that binds you down. You add one more layer of hypnotism into your own soul. Therefore whosoever thinks he is weak is wrong and whosoever thinks he is impure is wrong and is throwing a bad thought in the world. (Complete works, Vol. II, P. 295)."

His teachings manifested a wonderful glow of light which removed doubt and darkness. His speeches were such that convinced the listeners, and he brought about an inner transformation. He was a teacher by a divine right. He understood the minds of others with great clarity and foresight

and presented solutions which were difficult to challenge.

Conclusion

There is a dire need of the time that our youth must be introduced the teachings of Swami Vivekananda because Swami Vivekananda was a great thinker and reformer of India. He embraced education which signifies 'man-making'. It was the very mission of his life. He saw the solutions of many evils through education. He felt that the dire need of awakening man to his spiritual self. He revolutionised our life by giving emphasis on one thing again and again that nobody is weak.

Swami Vivekananda opened a new vista for all round development of the individual. He had opened the gates to all by teaching the path of humanity. He taught us value of devotion, concentration, self-control and spiritual discrimination. He sowed the seeds of self-confidence and hope in our mind. For his whole life, he took the side of truth. It is clear that nothing could satisfy his all devouring hunger for truth. We learned from him that peace of mind can only be attained through opening the doors and windows of our room. His role can never be forgotten in turning the history of India. I salute Swami Vivekananda and feel honoured being the native of the same land where the legendry Vivekananda was born 155 years ago. He will always remain with us. In his own words,

“It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire men everywhere until the world shall know that it is one with God”

He was a true revolutionary.

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