



Role of Swami Vivekananda in Amalgamation of Eastern and Western Philosophy in Order to Bring about a Paradigm Shift in Thoughts

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1. Introduction

What Hinduism needed, amidst the general disintegration of the modern era, was a rock where she could lie at anchor, an authoritative utterance in which she might recognize herself. And this was given to her, in these words and writings of the Swami Vivekananda. For the first time in history, we find that in the philosophy of Vivekananda, Hinduism itself forms the subject of generalization of a Hindu mind of the highest order. For age to come the Hindu man who would verify, the Hindu mother who would teach her children what was the faith of their ancestors will turn to Vivekananda's philosophy for assurance and light.

2. Objectives

1. To review the philosophical thoughts on Hinduism expressed by Swami Vivekananda.
2. In depth analysis of Swami Vivekananda's views at World Parliament of Religions at Chicago.
3. Content analysis of lectures delivered by Swamiji at Chicago to determine his attempts to amalgamate the Eastern and Western Philosophy and Religion.

3. Methodology

In-depth content analysis of Swami Vivekananda's philosophical views expressed at World Parliament of Religions held at Chicago.

4. Analysis

What Hinduism had needed was the organizing and consolidating of its own idea, what the world needed was a faith that had no fear of truth. Both these were found in the speeches of Swami Vivekananda of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago held on 11th of Sept, 1893. Nor could any greater proof have been given of the eternal vigour of the Sanatana Dharma, of the fact that India is as great in the present as ever in the past, then this rise of the individual, who, at the critical moment, gathers up and voices the communal consciousness.

That India should have found her own need satisfied only in carrying to the humanity outside her borders the bread of life is what might have been foreseen. Nor did it happen on this occasion for the first time. It was once before the sending out to the sister Lands the message of nation-making faith that India learnt as a whole to understand the greatness of her own thought a self unification that give birth to modern Hinduism. It was for the first time that one heard the command from a Teacher to His disciples, " Go ye out into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" It is the same though, the same impulse of love, that is uttered by the lips of Swami Vivekananda, when to a great gathering in the west he says " If one religion be true, then all others also must be true. Thus the Hindu faith is yours as much as mine". And again, in

amplification of the same idea "We, Hindus do not merely tolerate. We unite ourselves with every religion, praying in the mosque of the Mohammedan, worshipping before the fire of the Zoroastrian, and kneeling to the cross of the Christian. We know that all the religious alike, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolution, are but so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the infinite. So we gather all these flowers, and binding them together with the cord of love, make them into a wonderful bouquet of worship". To the heart of this speaker, none was foreign or alien. For him there exists only Humanity and Truth.

Of the Swami's address before the parliament of Religions, it may be said that when he began to speak it was of "the religious ideas of the Hindus", but when he ended, Hinduism had been created, the moment was ripe with this potentiality-
The vast audience that faced him was spellbound.

There is very little in the modern consciousness. Very little inherited from the past of Europe that does not hold some outpost in the city of Chicago. While the teeming of life and the eager interests of that centre may seem to some of us for the present largely a chaos, yet they are undoubtedly making for the revelation of some noble thought.

Such was the psychological area, such the sea of mind, young, tumultuous, overflowing with self assurance which confronted Vivekananda when he rose to speak. Behind him, on the contrary, lay an ocean, calm with long ages of spiritual development. Behind him lay a world that dated itself from the Vedas, and Upanishads, a world filled with religious systems of faiths and creeds, a quiet land, steeped in the sunlight of the tropics. In short, we can say, behind him, lay India.

These were the two mind floods, two immense, rivers of thought as it were, Eastern and modern, of which the yellow-clad wanderer on the platform on the Parliament of Religion formed for a moment the point of confluence.

Like the Krishna of the Gita, like Buddha, like Shankaracharya, like every great teacher that India thought has known, Swami Vivekananda's sentences are laden with quotations from the Vedas and Upanishads. He stands mainly as the revealer, the interpreter to India of the treasures that she herself possesses in herself. The truths he preached would have been as true had they never been born. They would have been equally authentic too. The difference would lie in their difficulty of access, in their want of modern clearness. Had he not lived, texts that today carry the bread of life to thousands might have remained obscure disputes of scholars?

He thought with authority and clarity. For he himself had plunged to the depths of realisation which he preached, and he came back like Ramanujan only to tell its secrets to the pariah, the outcast and the foreigner, Swami Vivekananda was a greater preacher of Karma. To him the workshop, the study and the farm are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the temple.

In his Master Ramakrishna Paramhansa, at Dakshineswar, Swami Vivekananda found that verification of the ancient texts which his heart and his reason demanded. Here was the reality which the books only brokenly described. Here was one to whom Samadhi was a constant mode to knowledge. Every one about him caught the vision of the divine. Upon the disciple came the desire for supreme knowledge like a fever.

Vivekananda's personality was a brief and intense epitome in India. The Shashtra's, the Guru and the Motherland are the three notes that mingle themselves to form the music of the works of Vivekananda.

To quote Swami Vivekananda "If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of most exalted character. In the face of this evidence if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others. I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, inspite of resistance, "Help and not fight", Assimilation and not Destruction, "Harmony and Peace and not Dissention".

5. Conclusion

Swami Vivekananda had a vision of a spiritually and materially rejuvenated India. This resulted in a creative tension in his mind, and he realized that he had to force a paradigm shift to take India to a new level. He tried to challenge Indians to make a shift in their personal paradigm about religion, spirituality, social progress and self-improvement. He did so mainly through his lectures delivered at Chicagointo. The paradigm shift Vivekananda was trying to bring about in America was to remove misconception about India and Hinduism the missionaries had drilled into the American mind over the years. He said that he was proud to belong to a religion which taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. Vivekananda was successful in bringing about the paradigm shift almost immediately, as the editorial of Chicago Evening Journal, September 14, 1893 reported that, "The more one reflects upon it the more one is convinced of the falseness of our position hitherto. How hopeless to send to convert such men (from Asia). Are they not fit preachers of their own domain? Is our idea of God more exalted than theirs? By what right we pretend to instruct them? These are grave but practical questions that must force themselves upon Christian church and upon all the people of the West. Contempt and pity have given way to respect and admirations." Hence, it can be concluded that true leaders bring about such paradigm shifts to propel people into action or to change their perceptions to herald a change.

References

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