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SECULARISM IN SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

Man, the rational, social and spiritual being is not satisfied with the fulfillment of physical or material desires only. Even in the midst of luxury and comfort man strives for something higher and better. Thus religion originates in man's struggle to transcend the limitations of the senses. But the problem is that when the intensest love that humanity has ever known has come from religion while the most hatred has also come from it. Religions, having tremendous power have often done more injury to the world than good simply on account of their narrowness and limitations. Secularism has a remarkable position in such an arena of religious chaos. Though in narrow sense secularism stands for an anti-religious attitude but in broader sense it means tolerance towards all religious beliefs. In this context my study is an attempt to show that Swami Vivekananda's whole philosophy including attitude towards universal religion is based on secularism in its broader sense.

INTRODUCTION

In popular sense the word 'secularism' depicts a kind of anti-religious attitude. It implies that what was previously regarded as religious is ceasing to be such and also a process of differentiation which results in the various aspects of the society political, economic, legal and moral becoming discrete to each other. But in broader sense

secularism stands for tolerance and respect towards all religious beliefs and practices of the world. In this context my study is an attempt to show that the root of Swami Vivekananda's whole religious philosophy consists in secularism adopting freedom and spiritual brotherhood as its root.

VIVEKANANDA'S SECULAR ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGION

According to Vivekananda it is the urge for freedom that distinguishes men from mere machines. To be more free is the goal of all human efforts, for only in perfect freedom there can be perfection. There is the presence of a universal dissatisfaction because freedom is every man's goal. This longing for freedom brings the idea of a Being called God who is absolutely free. With the conception of God as perfectly free Being man cannot rest eternally in the present status of bondage. In Vivekananda's view this effort to attain freedom underlies all forms of worship, even the worship of forefathers, natural objects by the rudest of mankind. The bondage of sin and impurity in the uncultivated savage is to his consciousness is very little. What he struggles against is the bondage of physical nature, the lack of physical gratification. But out of this lower consciousness grows a mental or moral bondage and a longing for spiritual freedom. Blessedness, eternal peace arising from perfect freedom is the highest concept of religion underlying all the ideas of God. Complete freedom or self-realization is the ultimate aim of every man and the truth of every religion consists in self realization. So there should not be hatred but unity amongst all religions.

In Vivekananda's view religion is a necessity of life. Man is not satisfied with his physical or material needs only. Even in the midst of comfort and luxury man craves for something higher and better. This craving in Swami's opinion is man's religious craving without seeking satisfaction for which we cannot live. It is because of which religion has never been vanquished. It originates in man's struggle to transcend the limitations of the senses. No idea can captivate human mind as religion does.

The in tensest love that humanity have ever known has come from religion and the most diabolical hatred has also come from religion. The noblest words of peace that the world has ever heard have come from man on the religious plan and bitterest

denunciation that the world has ever known has been uttered by religious man. No other human motive has deluged the world with blood as much as religion. It is because we are attached with only external differences of religions.

In every religion there are three parts-The philosophy setting forth its basic principles as well as the goal and means of reaching it. The second is the mythology consisting legends relating to the lives of man or supernatural beings. Another is the ritual which is more concrete. And the fact is that every religion believes own philosophy as absolute truth, own mythology as historical and one particular form of ritual as holy while the rituals of others as mere superstition. But in spite of all these differences the Universal Spirit which runs through all religions according to Vivekananda is the presence of a supernatural element. It may be a Personal God, Impersonal Principle or the Destiny or the Law. God is like the thread which runs through different religions those are compared with different pearls . He is the centre of every religion. Through high philosophy or low, through the most exalted mythology or the grossest, through the most refined ritualism or arrant fetishism every sect, every soul, every religion consciously or unconsciously is struggling upward , towards God.

The base of Swami Vivekananda's secular attitude towards different religions is his deep faith in Advaita Vedanta. It is the same spirit which dwells in every human being. The universal religion about which philosophers and others have dreamed in every country in Swami's view already exists. As the universal brotherhood of man is already existing, so also is universal religion . But this universal religion does not mean that one universal philosophy, mythology or ritual is to be followed by all .The acceptance of universal religion consists in recognizing that there may be different and various approach to the religious object. Diversity is the necessary condition and necessity for the existence of all things. Again unity in variety is the plan of the universe. As our social struggles are represented by different social organizations and different nations, likewise in man's spiritual struggle is represented by different religions. Taking the natural necessity of variation we should learn that the same thing can be viewed from different standpoints .So also different religions are to be existed and also to be tolerated. The Personal as well as Impersonal idea of God ,Moral Law, Ideal Man these all have to

come under the definition of religion .Religions having tremendous power have often done more injury to the world than good ,simply on account of their narrowness and limitations.

CONCLUSION

Swami Vivekananda terms fanatics as irresponsible as other lunatics in the world. All the wickedness of human nature is roused by it.. But when man come to the real spiritual universal concept then only religion will become real and living ,penetrate every pour of our society ,infinitely more a power of good than ever before .Vivekananda who is practical towards every problem is grieved by mere utterance of the words like universal brotherhood , love ,peace ,charity equality etc but gives importance on its application. In spite of numbers of differences all religions admit that apart from the body which perishes, there is a certain part which does not change like the body, a part that is immutable and eternal that never dies .This is the unitary spiritual element which always strives for realization of freedom. Different religions are different paths leading to the same goal. So, toleration and acceptance of the broad sense of secularism and not hatred and fanaticism is to be cultivated by every religious person. This is the very need for the survival of present human race as well.

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