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God in Swami Vivekananda's Social Philosophy: A peruse of Swamiji's letters

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Abstract:

Swami Vivekananda work's effect was to have posthumously and in that very spirit his letters continue to speak intimately to his present-day followers and inspire and impart faith to them. His thoughts and ideology can be seen through his works (speech and lectures), but a broader view can be seen from the private writings (letters), where thoughts are free to flow. If read in chronological manner, his letters would serve as his biography as his writings were honest and spontaneous flow of thoughts. Swamiji was devoted advocator of the Vedanta and appreciated and criticised all religions in equal measures, he strongly believed in *daridra-narayana-seva* - a term which means service of the poor God.

Keywords : Freedom, Spiritual, God, Society, Ideology, *Vedas*, *Upnishads*

The reflection of one's mind can be seen through the writings of the person, especially from the private writings, where thoughts are free to flow. Intellectual growth and development can easily be studied and observed of one's mind in the writings. Swami Vivekananda's life history is associated with resuscitation of the Indian religion and its pride of culture. Back then (19th Century), letters were the only means of staying in touch, Swamiji had family, friends and disciples all over the world and he frequently corresponded with all of them. As a man of words, he often wrote long letters with interesting incidents, quotes and messages. When reached USA for the first time, he wrote back home about his voyage and about his experiences in the foreign land.

If read in chronological manner, his letters would serve as his biography as his writings were honest and spontaneous flow of thoughts. Most often, Swamiji wrote in personal tone, with a style that is direct and decorated at the same time, loaded with quotes, phrases and words from different languages. He wrote in English, Bengali, Sanskrit, Hindi and French using simple words but complex analogies and displaying a clever sense of relating one thing to another coming up with unlikely metaphors and similes and compliments. His writings contained a good measure of wit and humour.

Swamiji sent out message of strength, courage and hope of which he himself was an embodiment. When the things were getting difficult for the people of Ramakrishna Mission, he told them to have faith, when one of his disciples met with tragedy, he asked him to not to despair. He asked everyone to be strong in the face of hardship, pray to God and continue his or her good work. He gave the example of his own life. In his letter to Shri Alasinga Perumal , he writes :

“I have been dragged through a whole life full of crosses and tortures, I have seen the nearest and dearest die, almost of starvation; I have been ridiculed, distrusted, and have suffered for my sympathy for the very men who scoff and scorn. Well, my boy, this is the school of misery, which is also the school for great souls and prophets.”

He spread his message of *daridra-narayana-seva* - a term which means service of the poor God. He wanted to convey the people and the younger generation the importance of being sensitive to the plight of the unfortunate and the needy. He preached that no religion other than that which involved the service of the poor. He stated that the faithful shall have the guidance of God and is the true hope of the nation.

Swamiji had contradicted the trappings of a man belonging to a particular belief. His ideology was based on the Upanishads and the Vedanta, but he did not compel to the established order of any religion. His simple message was spiritualism, freedom and man's own divinity. In a correspondence to Ms. Mary Hale, Swamiji expressed his idea as :

“I have no work under or beyond the sun. I have a message, and I will give it after my own fashion. I will neither Hinduise my message, nor Christianise it, nor make it any "ise" in the world. I will only my-ise it and that is all. Liberty, Mukti, is all my religion, and everything that tries to curb it, I will avoid by fight or flight.”

Swamiji vigorously stated in one of his letters that he did not wish for his name to be made important; instead he wanted his ideas to be the focus. He claimed in his letters that he was no metaphysician, nor a philosopher or a saint. He was only a person driven by his love for the poor. He emphasised non-attachment in love and work and underlying all his messages was an steady belief that there is a Power that guides those who do what is right and keeps a balance of forces in the Universe. In a poetic expression of this conviction he wrote in his letter to the Maharaja of Khetri :

“Whenever virtue subsides, and wickedness raises its head, I manifest Myself to restore the glory of religion’ -are the words, O noble Prince, of the Eternal One in the holy Gita, striking the keynote of the pulsating ebb and flow of the spiritual energy in the universe.”

Swamiji was devoted advocator of the Vedanta and appreciated and criticised all religions in equal measures, be it Hinduism, Christianity or Islam. He believed in interacting and exchanging ideas with the societies. Swamiji was messenger of freedom and liberty both in terms of spirituality and socially. His work’s effect were to have posthumously and in that very spirit his letters continue to speak intimately to his present day followers and inspire and impart faith to them.

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