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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND INDIAN NATIONAL INTEGRATION

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ARTICLE

National Integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It is the process of uniting differently people from all walks of life into a single whole. It signifies a condition of unity in diversity. According to Taylor "National Integration is a socio-psychological and educational process through which a feeling of unity, solidarity and cohesion develops in the hearts of the people and a sense of common citizenship or feeling of loyalty to the nation is fostered among them". It implies a sense of belonging, a feeling of togetherness and unity. India is a vast country inhabited by many races, castes, subcastes and communities. The most serious problem faced by India at present is, how to create and maintain the sense of integrity among the people. Various factors can contribute to develop such sense of integrity. In this regard the contribution of Swami Vivekananda is worth mentioning. He has not written a treatise on this issue, but his views regarding human values and the inherent unity of all human species sprinkled throughout his various lectures, discussions and writings.

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Swami Vivekananda was a man of versatile genius. The world found in him a patriot saint, a lover of art and architecture, a classical singer, a commanding orator of great charm, a visionary, a philosopher and above all a worshipper of humanity. Being a man of spiritual order he travelled all over India and was moved at the pitiable condition of India of his time. Through his all round effort he tried to find out the causes of India's degradation and to overcome them. He realized that the main cause of India's degradation lay in the neglect of the masses. Through his writings, lectures and works Vivekananda seeks to develop a sense of one-ness among all, the one-ness which is the only reassuring principle of India for her stability and progress. As an 'Advaitin' Swami Vivekananda believes in the inner unity or one-ness of all human beings and tried to awaken the dormant spirit of each individual. He addressed man as the glorious children of immortality. He had firm conviction that India is full of endless spiritual potentialities and that these potentialities could not be actualized if man does not know himself, does not grow fearlessly having faith in his fellow beings. In his 'Practical Vedanta' Vivekananda provided a very powerful basis for awakening of the masses of Indian society. With the Upanishad he declared, "Arise! Awake! And stop not until the goal is reached". We will then certainly cross the path, sharp as it is like the razor, and long and distant and difficult though it be.<sup>1</sup> What he wanted in every individual human being is his character to be built upon firm determination and good will for others.

Vivekananda's compassionate heart bled for the Indian people. In a remarkable letter to the Maharaja of Mysore he made an appeal, "The one thing that is at the root of all evils in India is the condition of the poor. The poor in the West are devils, compared to them ours are angels and it is therefore so much easier to raise the poor, the only service to be done for our lower classes are to give them education, to develop their lost individuality."<sup>2</sup> He realized that the root cause of all evils is selfishness tending towards exploitation. Thus the poor is exploited by the rich; the illiterate is exploited by the learned, physically weak is exploited by the physically strong and so on. He wanted to eliminate all these basic evils of society and to develop a sense of unity and integrity among them. He believed that all evils may be conquered by love, which is the real, living force of mankind. He proclaimed, "India will be raised, not with the power of the flesh but with the power of the spirits; not with the flag of destruction, but with the flag of peace and love." It is the power of love which prompts us to do actions which are morally good, universally accepted and conducive to the welfare of the society. Vivekananda held that all distinctions and separateness are illusory and unreal, and therefore unjust. Swami Vivekananda worked for awakening of the masses, the development of their physical and moral strength and creating in them a consciousness of the pride in the ancient glory and greatness of India. It is for this reason that he is hailed as one of the great architect of modern nationalism in India. He said, "We as a nation have lost our individuality, and that is the cause of all mischief in India. We have to give back to the nation its lost individuality and raise

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the masses. The Hindu, the Mohammedan, the Christian, all have trampled them under foot. Again, the force to raise them must come from inside”<sup>3</sup>.

Vivekananda was an apostle of national unity and communal harmony. In his own words, “One atom in this universe cannot move without breaking the whole world along with it. There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake and it is becoming everyday clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial or national or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of the world. Every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay, the whole of life, within its scope”<sup>4</sup>. It is to be remembered that Swami Vivekananda never entertained narrow nationalism; rather he embraced all nations, great or small. He had a catholic and tolerant mind to discover fundamental unity behind all nations of the world. As Nehru said, “His was a kind of nationalism which automatically slipped into Indian nationalism which was a part of Internationalism”<sup>5</sup>. Vivekananda foresaw the problems we are facing at the present world. For the solution of all problems he gave stress on man making. It was Sri Ramakrishna, the Master who taught Vivekananda to serve people. As a result Vivekananda, even after realizing the highest spiritual Truth, walk around the country, meet people, the rich and the poor and make people conscious about their inherent unity. As a preacher of Vedantic view of equality Vivekananda wanted total abolition of the cruel and unjust social customs due to misinterpretation of the real caste system. He said that the solution of our national problem does not lie in bringing down the higher, but raising the lower up to the level of the higher.

Though Vivekananda lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he had a clear glimpse of what was ahead for the world and therefore his thoughts and feelings were in terms of the problems which we are facing today and which we will be facing tomorrow. Like his great Master he also advocated the path of spirituality for the material and social upliftment of the masses. Addressing the people of India, Vivekananda said, “O India! Forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the

cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim,

“I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother.” Say, “The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, The Pariah Indian is my brother”. Proudly proclaimed at the top of thy voice, “the Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life.....Indian society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age”. Say brother “the soil of my India is my highest heaven; the good of my India is my good”<sup>6</sup>. Vivekananda’s idea of integrating the whole nation is not just a geographical or political integration, not even an emotional or sentimental integration, not even an integration based upon the feeling that we are Indians, but it is a spiritual integration based upon the awakening of the inner Spirit which is dormant in ordinary human being. He said that a nation can be integrated by upholding the national ideals. In his own words “The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensify her in those channels and the rest will take care of itself”. The message of Vivekananda is of immense value for social progress, international understanding and world peace. It has been rightly observed: In Swami Vivekananda the past and future of India fused in an ideal way and he shines as the symbol of integrated India for centuries to come.

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