



UNIVERSAL RELIGION OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Ms. Urmila Ramchiary

Assistant Professor

Department of Philosophy

D.H.S.K. College, Dibrugarh, Assam(India)

Abstract: Religion is that discipline or the way of life which enables a man to make a change in his own nature. For centuries in India religion is used mainly to explain away the world or as the means of escaping from its bondage. All individual religions are aspects of the one religion, which stands for self realization of the external relation between the eternal soul and eternal God. But Vivekananda aims at applying religion to solve the day to day problems of men as well. He is the first great Indian thinker of modern times to apply the principles of religion to solving the national problems and making religion a powerful instrument for social change. When Vivekananda pleads for a Universal Religion, he means not a new religion but a new attitude towards all religions. And he speaks on behalf of, not his own religion, Hinduism, but of all religion without any exception. "It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force will be created in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature." "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve the individuality and grow according to his own law of growth." Vivekananda accepts that part of religion only which integrates man, nations and the races.

Keywords: Assimilate, Humanity, Instrumental, Intolerance, Persecution, Religion, Universal.

Introduction:

Religion has been a crucial and all-encompassing feature of human life right through human society. The word 'Religion' is allied to the human society is as old as human civilization. The term 'Religion' has been derived from the Latin word 'religare' which means 'to bind together.' The etymological meaning of religion is 'a binding thread which holds together the individuals', a thread through which men acquire relief from pain and sufferings and live in peace helping one another in the society. Religion is a matter of faith, and to have a faith on a Supernatural Power which is superior to man ; that controls the nature and human life as well as brings an intimate relation with Him through various methods of worship, prayer and sacrifice is called religion.

Swami Vivekananda says that there are two modern theories of religion, the spirit theory of religion and the evolution of the Idea of the Infinite. The former upholds the ancestor- worship is the beginning of religious ideas, whereas the latter,

religion originates in the personification of the powers of nature. Man wants to know the truth behind death or the power behind nature. These two theories according to Swami Vivekananda get reconciled in the third theory which relates to 'the struggle to transcend the limitations of the senses'.

Religion is the only way to control one's emotions and desires. Every religion has its own set of rules, rituals, mythology, social customs, and worship and so on. Religious conflicts and controversies arise because of different philosophies, myths and rituals.

To Vivekananda true religion is privilege breaking and not privilege making as has been said by Karl Marx. His historical studies have let him to believe that almost all great religious teachers tried to break down the barrier of privileges. "Religion cannot live in sects and society....Religion does not consist in erecting temple or building Churches or attempting public worship. It is not to be found in books or in words, or in lectures or in organization. Religion consists in realization.

Concept of Universal Religion:

Each religion has its own philosophy, mythology and rituals as well as different methods of worship. Religious conflicts and disputes have arisen over various philosophies, myths and rituals. The religion can only be established by standing above these small differences. To that end, Swami Vivekananda called on the world to establish a universal religion. According to him, only by overcoming the conflicting differences between religions and establishing the only religion in the world is the Universal Religion.

Swami Vivekananda spoke of the possibility of a "universal religion" at the World Religions Summit in the United States in 1893. At a religious gathering in Chicago, he called on the world to establish a universal human religion. According to him, all human beings are children of God. And there is no difference between human beings. Therefore, peace and prosperity in the world will come easily if everyone can stand under one religious flag. He sought unity among the various religions of the world. This is why he tried to reconcile people of all religions. He quoted and explained a verse from the Gita, the original text of the Hindu religion, at the beginning of the Chicago discourse. In that verse, Lord Arjuna said – "Yeh yatha maa prabadyante

Stang sthaib bhajamyaham.

Mum watnanung wartante

Manusyah perth sahasah."

In the other words, O Arjuna, whatever devotee worships me, I worship him in the same way. This is because all human beings have followed the same path with all manifestations. And we have prayed to the one and only God by adopting different methods of prayer. Since everyone has a purpose, in the same world, there is potential for universal religion.

Swami Vivekananda was well aware of the fact that in today's world there are many religions with different beliefs and principles. Historically, there have been bitter conflicts between the religions. People of every religion consider their religion to be the best and give their ideological seat to all. But in spite of this conflict between people of different religions, no religion is disappeared from this earth. Every religion has a rightful place in its supportive community. Conflicts and disputes between religions have given new impetus enormity to the eradication of religions.

According to Swami Vivekananda, these conflicts and disputes between religions are external. This does not mean that the internal principles and ideals of religion can be affected. According to him, it is normal to have religious conflicts. If everyone thinks the same way then, there is no room for new thinking.

Characteristics of Universal Religion:

According to Swami Vivekananda, world religion should have two characteristics. They are:

1. The door of universal religion should be open to all people of the world.
2. Universal religion should be able to give satisfaction and peace to the people of all religious communities.

Possibilities of Universal religion:

Is it possible to have a universal religion in the world really possible? Swami Vivekananda has answered this question very simply and clearly. This is because of the fact that such a world religion has already been formed. We are busy with the external conflict that is why we are unable to notice its presence. He has put forward a number of arguments in support of this view.

1. Different religions are not antithetical to each other but complementary to each other. The inner truth of religion is faith deep and wide. Any religion focuses on a part of it and tries to observe that part strictly. Therefore, it is seen that every religion is engaged in the pursuit of the same truth.
2. According to Swami Vivekananda, there may be contradictory ideas about the same thing. If we take images of the same object from different angles then no two images are identical. But in reality they are reflections of the same object. In the same way, there is only one truth behind the religion. The differences between the religions can be seen by looking at it from different points of view. In fact, when we observe, we try to impose our emotional feelings on it. We try to understand it through our own perceptive powers. In fact, everyone tries to understand the same truth in different ways. That is why Vivekananda says that universal religion is really exists but we are not aware of it.

In fact, it is not possible to find a single element between different religions. The different religious community emphasizes the importance in different directions. Islam believes in the universal brotherhood. Hinduism focuses on spiritual development and Christianity focuses on self purification to enter the kingdom of God. Swami Vivekananda, therefore, refers to the universal religion as the only religion in the world, the only one that has a universal mythology and there will be acceptable rituals for all people. So there may be differences between people of different religious denominations. But still Universal religion will be possible.

According to Swami Vivekananda, one of the characteristics of universal religion is that everyone has to accept that there are different ways to achieve religious goals. In this case, the individual must be given full freedom. People of every religious community should respect the rules and regulations of other religions. Respect for other work means but not tolerance. One has to pray, serve etc. together with people of any religion. He should pray to God in temples, mosque and churches. According to him, the various objects, human beings, animals, plants of this diverse world are all manifested in the same entity. There is nothing wrong with those who are able to grasp this truth.

Although there is a difference between men and women, both are the same as human beings. In the same way, there is unity among human beings, animals and plants in the field of life. Similarly, different religions have different opinions about the truth, although in reality they are the same. Since everyone speaks the same absolute truth. He was able to grasp the universal truth behind all religions and was therefore respectful of all religions. He says, "I accept all the religions of the past and follow them. I worship God in the same way that all Hindus worship God. I go to the Muslim Mosque and go to the Church of all the Christians and kneel down to the cross. I went to a Buddhist monastery and took refuge in the teachings of Buddhism. I will go to the forest and meditate and see the divine light that illuminates everyone's heart." All believers in the world must be very generous.

Importance of Universal Religion:

Swami Vivekananda saw a common goal among all religions, which he called the 'Essence of Universal religion. This common feature is God or Parmeswar or Bhagwan is used in a very broad sense. It refers to the all pervading, all merciful and all –powerful God. All religions, knowingly or unknowingly are engaged in the practice of the God. The God is the ultimate goal of all religions.

To Vivekananda true religion is privilege breaking and not privilege making as has been laid by Karl Marx. His historical studies have led him to believe that almost all great religious teachers tried to break down the barrier of privilege. "Religion cannot live in sects and society....Religion does not consist in erecting temples or building churches or attending public worship. It is not to be found in books or in words, or in lectures or in organization. Religion consists in realization." To Vivekananda, religion is not scriptural bound or lecture bound. It stands for spiritual unfoldment and not mere creeds and rituals. Vivekananda does not believe in so called institutionalized religion. This is clear from his words, "If you want to be religious, enter not the gate of organized religion." He accepts that part of religion only which integrates men, nations and the races. As such his constant theme is : altruistic service alone is religion. Priest- craft, in his view, is the name of a system of privileges claimed on the grounds of spiritual superiority. In one of his lectures Swamiji exhorts, "Root-up priest-craft from the old religion and you get the best religion in the world." In the words of Vivekananda, "Priest-craft in nature is cruel and heartless. Religion goes down where priest-craft arises."

Swami Vivekananda says, "What I want to propagate is a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic, and equally conducive to action....To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is my ideal of religion." We must distinguish between Tattvam, the ultimate truth which is absolute and Matam, 'opinions' about it which are relative. The trouble comes when people mistake the relative for the absolute. All individual religions are aspects of the one Religion, which stands for self-realization of the eternal relation between the eternal soul and Eternal God. When Vivekananda pleads for a Universal Religion, he means not a new religion but a new attitude towards all religions. And he speaks on behalf of, not his own religion, Hinduism, but of all religions without any exception. "It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, which whole force will be created in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature." "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth."

To Vivekananda, no man is born into any religion, but every man has a religion in his soul. In one of his letter, Vivekananda writes, "we want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither Vedas nor Bible nor the Koran, yet this has to be done by harmonizing the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran." The religion which Vivekananda wants to teach is the religion of the Vedanta and the Upanisads- the religion which looks upon man as the veritable manifestation of God. Paying highest tribute to the Vedanta or Hinduism Vivekananda exhorts, "No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that religion is not in fault, but it is the Pharisees and Sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites, who invest all sorts of engine of tyranny."

Conclusion:

Vivekananda visualizes the fact that so long religion remains in the hands of the chosen few, or of a body of priests, no real change comes to man in both individual and collective life. Throughout the ages there have been various methods of uplifting the masses. But Vivekananda's plan for the uplift of the masses is most constructive, practical and comprehensive. He touches the vital cord in this matter- the religion which according to him is the innermost core of education.

Swami Vivekananda envisioned the establishment of a Universal Religion that could satisfy people from all walks of life. Swamiji wanted all people to stand under one religious flag, avoiding the various differences between people of

different religions. But it seems to be the subject matter of the imagination; it is not easy to establish a single world religion. Because, there are so many contradictory signs and differences between different religions. These differences are not easily overcome. Only a handful of philosophers and scholars can comprehend Swami Vivekananda's plan for this universal religion. But most people in the world are ignorant and illiterate. They firmly believe that their religion is the best of all. It is not easy for all the ignorant and illiterate people to break this belief without the great advancement of knowledge and education. Therefore, looking at the real, social, political, cultural and religious environment of the human race, it can be said with certainty that it is not possible for a universal religion to be established. However, it must be acknowledged that Swami Vivekananda's plan for universal religion has a great significance.

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