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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S CONCEPTION OF FREEDOM

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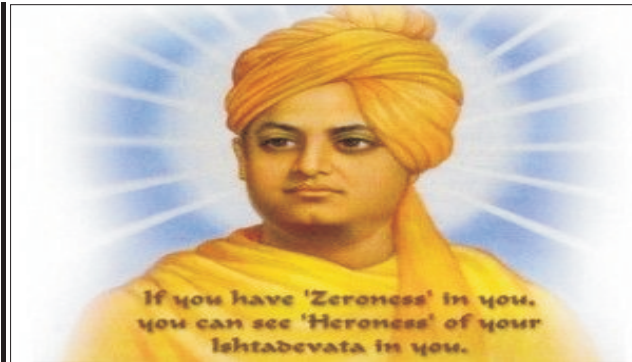
ABSTRACT

Swami Vivekananda's concept of freedom is spiritualistic. His idea of freedom is not a mere concept but a deeper realization of the realization of the eternal truth. According to him, freedom is eternal and infinite, inalienable and immutable. He defied that freedom is the same as god.

KEYWORDS: spiritualistic, Vivekananda's concept of freedom, material and spiritual freedom.

INTRODUCTION :

The impact of the Upanishads is event on Vivekananda's concept of freedom. He Vivekananda preached Mukti instead of heaven, enlightenment instead of salvation. Vivekananda's concept of freedom will be divided into-(a) spiritual freedom (b) individual freedom (c) social freedom (d) economic freedom. As his concept of freedom is all inclusive, he pleaded for



a synthesis of individual and social freedom as well as material and spiritual freedom. This paper deals with the various freedom advocated by Swami Vivekananda

SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

Vivekananda held freedom to be an inherent spiritual necessity for all forms of life, sentient or insentient. "Wherever there is life there is this search for freedom and that freedom and that freedom is the same as God. Necessarily this freedom gives us mastery over all nature and is impossible without knowledge. The whole universe is in fact that result of this struggle for freedom.

Vivekananda held freedom to be absolute and infinite, changeless and quality less self-existent and immanent. This absolute freedom is to be embodied by the individual. Vivekananda considered freedom indispensable for the spiritual growth of the individual. Freedom is an end in itself to the individual. It is the individual is natural and indestructible right and man must rediscover it from within.

THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

Vivekananda viewed freedom both in the absolute and in the relative terms. According to him, absolute freedom is the nature of the soul. He

was of the view that absolute freedom is inseparable from man, either in the absolute or relative sense of the word. Therefore, absolute freedom should not be regarded as abstract from the viewpoint of individual and society. The individual and society must move up to it. The individual is essential spiritual. Social life is only a part of the individual's total view of life. The individual aspires for higher things of life, which society itself cannot provide. The individual's fulfillment of life will be made possible only following the absolute ideal of freedom. As a matter of fact, society becomes civilized only when it encourages the growth of the divine from within the individual and enlarges the sphere of individual freedom. Therefore, the relative freedom of the individual is incomplete without the pursuit of spiritual freedom.

This concept of freedom inculcates the individual's identity with society as it encourages the growth and freedom of all individuals. Vivekananda asserts that individual freedom is no threat to social freedom. When human beings are most clearly aware most awake, they feel that in some sense, which cannot be clearly articulated, they are instruments for the expression of the spirit, 'Vessels' of the spirit. When he realizes this, we outgrow individualism and espouse the case of our fellow-man because we and our fellow-man are the expression of the same spirit.

INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

He aspired that every individual must cultivate as fee body, mind and spirit. Vivekananda believed that the individual perfects himself by acting freely and the perfect individual, in turn, perfects society. The strength and vitality of society depends on individual freedom. He came to believe that individual growth can never be achieved by the external pressure or intervention.

Let men have the light of liberty. That is the only condition of growth. As long as individual is in a position to seek his own growth, outside intervention is destructive to individual freedom. These social rules which stand in the enfoldment of this freedom are injurious, and steps should be taken to destroy them speedily. According to Vivekananda, society was only a social agency and it should not encroach on individual not the individuals not the individuals for it.

RIGHT OF THE INDIVIDUALS

Vivekananda belief in freedom led him to advocate the rights of individuals the rights of individuals in society. Liberty becomes meaningless without equality or rights. His faith in the inherent individuals freedom is the basis of his defense of equal rights and opportunities for all individuals to manifest their growth. Therefore, he did not deny freedom to anyone on any pretext. He held that freedom should not be monopolized by any section of society. Those who say that if the ignorant and the poor be given liberty, i.e., full right to their body, wealth etc., and if their children have the same opportunity tot better their children have the same opportunity to better their condition and acquire knowledge as those of the rich and highly situated, they would become perverse do they say this for the God or society or blinded by their selfishness?. According to Vivekananda, the right of individuals is natural and inalienable as freedom is. Among the natural rights of individuals are natural and inalienable as freedom is. Among the natural rights of individual, he conceded the right to liberty, equality, family freedom of thought and property etc.

He condemned the privileges as baneful and tyrannical. He was intolerant of human indignities based on the privileges. He advocated social equality and in this aspect, he was impressed by the western society. He Vivekananda wanted to import from America and plant on the Indian soil.

According to Vivekananda, the individual life is in the life of the whole, the individual happiness is in the happiness of the whole. Exclusiveness is against the nature of the individual. As the individual believes in social union, he strives for promotion of the freedom and welfare of all. Thus to Vivekananda the interests of the individual and society are not incompatible. He as a Vedanta identified the individual interests with society. He believed that the life individual is inseparable from society. He pointed out man is individual at the same time universal. It is while realizing our individual nature that we realize even our national and universal nature.

SOCIAL FREEDOM

The implication of social freedom is that individual freedom is closely related to social freedom. Vivekananda pointed out that "None deserves liberty who is not ready to give liberty". Vivekananda was critical of the invidious social restriction and excrescences that hinder the individual initiative and the social growth and wanted to weed them out. He suggested that for proper growth, society must cultivate an assimilative outlook and receive new ideal from other communities. In other words, he meant by social liberty growth oriented social life based on individual freedom and equality.

He made his view clear on society and religion as follows: "the Hindu must not give up his religion, but must keep religion within its proper limits and give freedom to society to grow" Vivekananda's liberal outlook, which denounced social rigidity, exclusiveness and narrowness, paved the way for his enunciation of social

synthesis.

SOCIAL SYNTHESIS

As far as India was concerned, Vivekananda wanted to make it dynamic by evolving the process of social synthesis. For example, he wanted "A new India with Vedantic brain and Moslem body" Vedantic freedom and Islamic equality. He pointed out that the social liberty of the west and strongly advocated the fusion of "A European society with India's religion". Further, with glowing optimism, he visualized an idea society for India based on the synthesis of ideas and institution. He also believed "That the material conditions of the masses could not be improved without the knowledge of science and technology as developed in the west". Thus, Vivekananda wanted to merely social synthesis but also economic freedom to ameliorate the living conditions of the masses.

ECONOMIC FREEDOM

By economic freedom, Vivekananda meant freedom from want. He right realized that economic poverty has been a hindrance to the individual freedom. He noticed that his material freedom and the individual happiness are interrelated. He was aware "That there are child like men in every society who require a certain amount of experience, of enjoyment. He frankly admitted that all the members of as society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education, or knowledge. His concept of economic freedom is not based on exploitative and acquisitive instinct of the individual. It is altruistic inequalities. As individual abilities differ, economic inequalities do come into existence. The glaring economic inequalities exist only when equal opportunities are denied to the individual. The individual uplifts himself by sacrificing his thirst for the pleasures of life, accumulation of wealth and serves society. He enjoined the individual to enjoy wealth in the name of the lord. "Have all that you want, and more, only know the truth and realize it. Wealth does not belong to anybody. Have no idea of proprietorship, possession. You are nobody, nor am I, nor anyone else. All belongs to the lord. That is to say, the individual can enjoy his wealth but at the same time, he must use it for social welfare with the spirit of religious service. Thus to Vivekananda, "Wealth is for distribution". Wealth is, therefore, not only personal but also social in purpose. This stand of thought of Vivekananda is identical with the Gandhian theory of trusteeship, which emphasizes that property is personal but at the same time social, for it is to be used foOr social good.

Vivekananda's views on the fulfillment of basic economic needs of life and performance of social economic dharma are consistent with the Hindu scheme of socio organization, namely, Purushartha the (four fold object of life), Ashrama Dharma (four fold order of society). Vivekananda too was of the view that the individual must go through Ashrama Dharma to seek fulfillment of life.

CONCLUSION

Thus, individual freedom closely related to social freedom. Vivekananda wanted not merely social synthesis but also stood for economic freedom to improve the living conditions of the masses. He was of the view that pursuit of material life fulfils spiritualism. Thus, Vivekananda's concept of freedom is all inclusive. It stands for a synthesis of the individual and social freedom, material and spiritual freedom. In fact, his deification of freedom led him to advocate human equality.

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