

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA : POET AS A CHAMPION OF SOCIO-RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Dr. Ardhendu Sarkar

Asst. Professor, Syamsundar College,
The University of Burdwan, Purba Bardhaman,
West Bengal, India.

 **ORCID**

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9041-8510>

e-mail- sarkarardhendu786@gmail.com

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Page- 11 – 19

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Abstract-

Swami Vivekananda composed a good number of poems in English and Bengali but his lectures throughout the world made him famous. His Chicago lecture delivered in 1893 were exclusively significant before he could lay the foundation stone of Ramkrishna Mission at Belur in India (1897). It is a question for a Vivekananda scholar to answer how he became a champion of all time Socio-religious Education. It may be argued that he was a Hindu monk speaking for the particular religious section of people. Again it may be questioned how far is there coherence and unity between his poetic work and lectures.

Indeed Vivekananda was a visionary poet who could visualise Socio-political condition of the world as a whole. In addition to that he was a teacher of teachers among world community of educationist. He raised his poetic voice in praise of liberty in United States of America and inspired people in India and other countries not only for a political freedom but also for Socio-religious freedom from slavery, ignorance, poverty and so on. Here lies the magic of beckoning light of Vivekananda's educational vision intermingled with his poetic insight. Furthermore he addressed his lectures fully knowing well that man is living God and worship of God therefore should lead not only to a part of religious corner but also to the battlefield of humanity.

A close analysis of Vivekananda's poems shows how he taught to worship lord of light! It is to be examined what he meant by the lord 'Muktir Bardan' and how it can be earned not by spiritual worship but also hard struggle inside or outside or spiritual

realm. Equality of man and woman was for him a falling blessings of God living inside a man and it cannot be obtained only by worship but also by 'Sangram'

This paper throws a new light on Swami Vivekananda as a poet and a seer sitting on a high bench of socio-religious teacher of all time.

Main Discussion

1. (i) Introduction-

Swami Vivekananda delivered lectures including his famous Chicago lecture in 1893 as many as 300 above. He also composed a good number of poems with a total of twenty eight. There are only nine poems composed in Bengali and subsequently translated in Bengali.

Lectures delivered by Swami Vivekananda according to Swami Tapasyananda in forty three groups apart from some other lectures. Those lectures are mostly on philosophical and religious lectures. Here in these lectures Swami Vivekananda appears to be a socio-religious educator. It is quite interesting to note and inner showing a surge of poetic mind sometimes overflows. A question becomes eminent as to how and why Swami Vivekananda the poet and the socio-philosophic educator mingles with each other. In this connection 'Letter of Swami Vivekananda' a specially letter with poetic flowering also reveals some inner connection of the poet and educationist as a whole.

In Vivekananda's lectures spiritual aim of man is expressed in the language of a visionary poet. He also showed the difference between Indian and Western philosophy. Indian philosophy as he showed is part and parcel of Indian religion which is quite different from that of western philosophy.

Man's spiritual aim is often explained by Vivekananda in terms of poetic awakening. In this way Vivekananda the poet and Vivekananda the socio-religious educationist have always gone hand in hand.

1.(ii) In a poem composed in 1895 Vivekananda invokes a Sannyasi and says-

'Wake up the note! The song that had its birth
Far off, where worriedly taint could never reach
In mountain caves and glades of forest deep,
Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth or fame
Could never dare to break; where rolled the stream
Of knowledge, truth and bliss that follows both
Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold ! say-
'Om tat sat om!'¹

Here voice of a poet mingles with that of an onlooker who is basically an educator. So he further speaks-

‘Strike off thy fetters! Bounds that bind thee down
Of shining gold or darker, baser ore;
Love, hate, good, bad and all the dual throng,
Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped not free
For fetters; though of gold, are not less strong to bind,
Then off with them, sannyasian bold! Say-
Om tat sat om!’²

In this poem he clearly refers to ancient India and wisdom of an Indian visionary. In another poem he addressed ‘To The Awakened India’ in the following language. In this poem the voice of Vivekananda as an educationist is clearly heard-

‘Once more awake’
For sleep it was, not death, to bring thee life
Anew, and rest to lotus-eyed for visions
Daring yet The World is need awaits, o truth!
No death for thee!’³

Here a style of making a speech or addressed is evidently expressed. He further goes on to say in the same fashion-

‘Rusume thy March’
With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest even of the roadside dust
That lies so low yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold and free, Awakener, ever
Forward!’ Speak thy string words’⁴

One of his major books- ‘Bartaman Bharat’ he speaks out, as if a poet- ‘The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian is my brother. Thou, too, clad with but a rag round thy loins proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice: ‘The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, Indian God’s and Goddess are my God. 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 India is my highest heaven the good of India is my good and repeat and pray day and night, ‘O thou Lord of Gouri, O Thou Mother of the universe, Vouchsafe manliness unto me! O thou Mother of strength take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and make me a man!’⁵

A tone of universal teaching is heard here in addition to heartfelt expression for fellow countrymen. Language of invocation so boldly used here that it sounds like a poem.

In all these poems and speeches a distinctive feature of Swami Vivekananda is evident. In each case he invokes and awakens his listener and or readers like a teacher. The motto of the Education of the masses is very clear here. The poet and the educator are seen here sitting hand in hand.

During visit to Kashmir Vivekananda composed a poem under the title ‘4th July. In this poem he wrote-

‘Behold the dark clouds melt away,
That gathered thick at night, and hung
So like a gloomy pall above the earth.
Before thy magic touch, the world
Awakes the birds in chorus sing
The flowers raise their star-like crowns
Dew-set, and wave thee welcome fair.
The lakes are opening wide in love
Their hundred thousand lotus-eyes
To welcome Thee, with all their depth.
All hail to thee, thou Lord of light!
A welcome new to thee, today,
O sun ! today thou sheddest LIBERTY!
Be think thee how the world did wait,
and search for thee through time and clime. ⁶

Here spirit of freedom and love for ‘LIBERTY’ mingles with each other on the occasion of day of liberty in America. Being a monk of India dependent under British rule Vivekananda expressed his unmelted felling of liberty and saluted International statue of liberty.

In this context he also expressed his whole hearted desire for equality of men and women and universal humanity. So he wrote further-

‘Some gave up home and love of friends
And went in quest of thee, self burnished,
Through dreary oceans, through primeval forest,
Each step a struggle for their life or death.

Then came the day when work bore fruit,
and worship, love and sacrifice,
Fulfilled, accepted and complete.
Then thou, propitious, rose to shed
The light of Freedom on Mankind.
Move on, o Lord, on thy resistless path!
Till thy high noon o’erspreads the world
Till every land reflects thy light,
Till men and women, with uplifted head,
Behold their shackles broken and
Know, in springing Joy, their life renewed. ⁷

2.(i) In a poem addressed his own self under the title ‘ To my own soul’ the poet Vivekananda wrote -

‘Hold yet a while, strong Heart,
 Not part a lifelong yoke
 Though blighted looks the present, future gloom
 And age it seems since you and I began our
 March up hill or down sailing smooth o’er
 Seas that are so rare-
 Thou nearer unto me, than off-times I myself
 proclaiming mental moves before they were!’⁸

It is nothing but a poetic expression of Socio-religious philosophy of Vivekananda. Here he invokes God living in man himself. He is fully aware that some one inside himself leads his life and action like a guiding force. His social awareness and religious belief are somehow joint together in the process of poetic creativity.

2. (ii) Many of his poems are written in the form of a letter or words of well wishes and ‘A Benediction’. He addressed sister Nivedita and wrote-

‘The mother’s heart, the southern breeze,
 The sacred charm and strength that dwell
 On Aryan altars, flaming, free ;
 All these be yours, and many more
 No ancient soul could dream before-
 Be thou to India’s future son
 The mistress, servant, friend in one.’⁹

This poem is written with a universal love and felling of brotherhood which inspired him indeed to address his listeners of Chicago lecture with the words-“Sisters and Brothers of America, It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us.”¹⁰ In this context he also said –‘I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the perseented and the refuges of all religious and all nations of the earth.’¹¹

In another poem he addressed Mary an American lady he wrote-

‘Now Sister Mary,
 You need not be sorry
 For the hard rabs I gave you,
 You know full well
 Though you like me tell,
 With my whole heart I love you.
 The babies I bet,
 The best friends I met,
 Will stand by me in weal and woe
 And so will I do,
 You know it too.

Life, name or fame even heaven forgo
For the sweet sisters four
Sans reproche et sans peur,
The truest, noblest, steadfast, best.’¹²

Here he speaks to his sister Mary like a brother but the tone of personal feeling is so nicely expressed that voice of a teacher guardian is echoed in a broad universal perspective.

In another poem eternal mother Kali is invoked by a son with an expression of sweet relationship between mother and a son. In his poem “Kali The Mother’s” he wrote-

‘The Stars are blotted out.
The clouds are covering clouds
It is darkness Vibrant sonant
In the roaring, whirling wind.’¹³

Here, Kali the Mother is an eternal mother in the perspective of natural Calamity of the eternal forces. Again it is a poem of philosophical thought based on socio religious thinking.

Similarly in one of his lectures he said- ‘Religion is not the outcome of the weakness of human nature; religion is not here because we fear a tyrant; religion is love unfolding expending growing.’¹⁴ In this speech it is crystal clear that religion is nothing but foster mother as like ‘Kali The Mother’.

In a lecture delivered in Oakland on March 7, 1900 Swami Vivekananda explained ‘The laws of life and Death’. Swamiji said- ‘How to get’ rid of this birth and death not how to go to heaven but how one can stop going to heaven this is the object of the search and in this context he further explained what is death. The concept of ‘Mother kali’ is based on it. Vivekananda the poet invoked ‘Mother Kali’ in the following language-

‘Come, O Mother, come!
Who claws misery love,
And hug the form of Death,
Dance in destructions dance
To him the Mother comes.’¹⁵

He who was a disbeliever of Kali finally surrendered to mother kali with all his cosmic belief. But he never disowned his guru Sri Ramkrishna Paramahansadev. Indeed he said- ‘Ramkrishna Paramahansa dedicated me to her. Later he admitted that Sri Ramkrishna was an incarnation of Kali and woked up the body of Ramkrishna for her own ends.

Although Vivekananda believed his Guru to be incarnation of Kali on occult power, he himself was not a mystic one. Ramkrishna taught his disciples with various examples. Education for common people was very important Vivekananda followed his Guru and delivered lectures a different corners of the world for Socio-religious education of Common people.

3.Vivekananda’s philosophy of socio-religious education was- education from within and not education obtained by outside efforts. He said-

‘Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge exists in the mind; suggestions, is the friction which brings it out,¹⁷ For him a real education implies a power earned by way of Controlling innerflow of will power. Education means flowering of intellect or intellectual ability and other related mental instincts.

In his language ideal education is as follows – ‘Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man’¹⁸. So expression of greatness in human being is part and parcel of education. Principles of education for vivekanandas’ are as follows:-

1. To earn power and ability for struggle in life.
2. To earn power for formation of character.
3. To earn expression or bravery like a lion
4. To earn power of unselfishness
5. To earn power of knowledge useful for human development.
6. To earn power to be self dependent.
7. To earn power of humanity.

In this way aim of education as Vivekananda prescribed- ‘The end of all education all training should be man-making. The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow’.

There are many instances of poetic creation of Vivekananda based on his socio-religious philosophy of education.

4. In his poetic addressed to inspired India. He wrote not as a poet but also as an educator-

‘Once more awake!

For sleep it was, not death, to bring thee life

Anew, and rest to lotus-eyes for visions

Daring yet. The world in need awaits, O Truth!

No death for thee!

Resume thy March,

With gentle feet that would not break the

Peaceful rest even of the roadside dust

That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,

Blissful, bold, and free. Awakener, ever

Forward! Speak thy stirring words.

Thy home is gone,

Where loving hearts heats had brought thee up and

Watched with joy thy growth. But Fate is strong-

This is the law’⁻¹⁹

It is evident that unanner of education Vivekananda taught follows the rules of life bound by external and Internal urges for spirituality. So he wrote-

‘all things come back to the source

They sprung, their strength to renew.

Then start afresh

From the land of thy birth, where vast cloud-belted

Snows do bless and put their strength in thee,
For working wonders new. The heavenly
River tune thy voice to her own immortal song;
Deodar shades give thee eternal peace.²⁰

In a letter written in Bengali in 1897 Vivekananda further explained- The Education that India needed in the following language- ‘It has never been given to the masses of India to express the inner light which is their inheritance.’

Conclusion:

Vivekananda as a socio philosophical thinker had multifarious approaches to life and culture based on his educational insight. An academic study of Vivekanandas poetry interms of his socio-religious philosophy of education needs detailed analysis of his each and every poems.

The theory of Vivekananda’s educational philosophy is expounded by practices not only in India but also in the world. In this way his contribution to civilization as well as civilized Education is beyond any Question. As far as his poetic creativity is concerned his poems are but keynote of a Socio religious teacher.

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