
Swami Vivekananda's Concept of Physical, Intellectual and Spiritual Help in the Essay "The Secret of Work"

Dr Archana

Associate Professor, Department of English, Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi-221005

Article Received: 23/03/2025

Article Accepted: 29/04/2025

Published Online: 30/04/2025

DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2025.19.05.774

Abstract

Swami Vivekananda became so popular for his foresight and deep sensitiveness to the socio-economic, moral and spiritual structure of the country. His intellectual vision was highly clear. By the lectures and speeches of Swami Vivekananda, many youths were enlightened to ideas of social-service and character-building. Swami Vivekananda dedicated his life to guiding the youth and to support our nation. His concept of service to the poor inspired many youths. Swami Vivekananda was a great inspiration and a role model to youth throughout his lifetime, and continues to inspire the youth of today. Swami Vivekananda has very significantly spoken about the nature of help we can extend to needy persons. He has categorized the help in three sections - spiritual help, intellectual help and physical help.

According to Vivekananda physical help may remove the physical needs of the needy person for some time. But his requirements may come back to him soon. We cannot provide the physical help and remove the wants of a person permanently. It is only with the knowledge of the spirit these wants can be removed from the person permanently. He who gives spiritual knowledge is the greatest benefactor of mankind. Spiritual help is the greatest help given to human beings. Until there is spiritual strength in man, his physical needs cannot be well satisfied. Next to the spiritual help comes the intellectual help.

Keywords: Indian, Freedom, Help, Physical, Intellectual, Spiritual.

Introduction

According to Vivekananda the gift of knowledge is the greatest gift than that of food or cloths. It is said that the real life of man consists of the knowledge. Humans have paved the thoughtful way for Indian Writing in English (Chavan 3).

Pre-independence Indian authors specially Swami Vivekananda is confronted with a galaxy

of themes. His favourite theme is moral sensibility. Thus, a religious man considers moral values means for the realisation of God. Dr. I.C. Sharma comments:

A moral man can afford to be an atheist, but a truly religious person can never afforded to be immoral,

(Sharma 50)

Now, in this context Dr. Surma Das Gupta observes:

Morality is the technique of his self-expressions; it gives concrete forms to his dreams, helps him to actualise his vision by practicable details. Morality loss its true significance if separated from religion in a higher senses that of spiritual attainment (Gupta 3)

The narration is based on emotional observations of deep meditation and organic revelations of self in his various narrations. He defines his views:

There is but one Soul in the universe not two. It neither comes nor goes. It is neither born, nor dies, nor reincarnates. How can It die? Where can It go? All these heavens, all these earths and all these places are vain imaginations of the mind. (Vivekananda 285)

The question is if soul is eternal, so how can it become the subject of bondage?

Swami Vivekananda remarks that the soul is not eternally bound. The bondage of the soul is apparent and not actual. We are spiritually pure, emancipated and perfect. But when we are attached to ourselves i.e. the feeling of little. The bondage is nothing but a veil of ignorance. As soon as the veil is lifted, we see the Infinite Existence in ourselves. It is worthless to search freedom outside us. The emancipation lies in the bosom of the soul. The Advaitist gives us lesson to know the truth and be free in a moment. As soon as this truth is known by us our ignorance vanishes when this truth is realized by us, all the differences between men and women, God and Angel, animals and plants will disappear and we will be in a condition to reline oneness of existence As soon as this truth is known by us our ignorance vanishes when this truth is realized by us, all the differences between men and women, God and Angel, animals and plants will disappear and we will be in a condition to reline oneness of existence in this reference, he declares :

He who in this world of many sees that one, he who in the mass of insentiency less that or one sentient being he who is this world of shadows. Catches is that reality, unto him belong internal places, unto none else, unto none else. (Vivekananda 289)

Swami Vivekananda' s Belief Atman is not in Bound.

According to Swami Vivekananda, Atman is not in bound. But it becomes subject of bondage due to ignorance. Human being is the constituent of three elements the body, the mind and the self. The body is the external covering of the soul, the mind is the internal coating of the soul, and the soul itself is the eternal, pure, genuine perfect and all-pervading actuality. The soul is the conscious element in the body. It acts through mind and body and enjoys the fruits of its action. The action performed by man produces an impression in the mind called Sanskar. These Sanskaras unitedly create a power which is summoned character. This character is the effect of the physical and mental performances performed by the individual. After the demise of the human being the elements which create the body dissolve in its component elements but the Sanskaras remain in the form of best and finer element. These Sanskaras become a power and due to this power Atman is needed to assume another body. Swami Vivekananda compares the function of the Sanskaras with the whirlwind Swami Vivekananda remarks thus:

When the whirl falls down, The Atman finds that it is all pervading. It can go where It likes It entirely free, and is able to manufacture any number of minds or bodies It likes; but until then It can go only with the whirl. This freedom is the goal towards which we are all moving. (Vivekananda 295)

Swami Vivekanand's original name is Narendranath Datta. He has completed his education in Calcutta. At the age of 21 he came in contact with his Spiritual Guru Shri. Ramkrushna Paramhans at Dakshineswar. He has decided to devote his conscious existence for the service of mankind. His lessons prompts peace and brotherhood and his often showed his thoughts in beautiful poems. Vivekananda was powerful orator both in English and Bengali. Majority of his published works are the compilation of his lectures give delivered around the world. He was a singer and poet who has composed many songs and poems. In the extract titled, "The secret of Work", is taken from Vivekananda's The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II". It tells us about the importance of spiritual help given to mankind to remove miseries from the world. According to Swami Vivekananda the lack of spiritual knowledge and the addiction of want lead man to misery. So we must help needy people physically but the best help we can give them is spiritual help.

Vivekananda mentions that, "Ignorance is death, and knowledge is Life..."

"Life without knowledge is of no value..." (Vivekananda 73).

Due to ignorance we are not aware of our real nature and become subject to bondage he remarks thus:

.....ignorance is the great mother of all misery, and the fundamental ignorance is to think that the Infinite weeps and cries, that He is finite.

(Vivekananda 40)

Swami Vivekananda's Views of Ignorance and Knowledge

Some men attempt to reveal the secret of ignorance through Jnana and they are summoned Jnana yogi. Some attempt to achieve their goal performing action selflessly and they are called Karma yogi. Again, some men attempt to establish communion with God through love and they are known 'Bhakta' (devotees). And lastly, there are people who attempt to realise god by their power of concentration and this technique of realisation is known Raja-yoga. Thus there are four ways for the realisation of Moksha; Jnana- yoga, Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga and Raja-yoga Jnana-yoga is the way of realisation of the supreme reality, i.e. Brahman through knowledge. The bondage is due to ignorance and hence, there is no emancipation without knowledge. It tells us that one can get the idea of the reality only by obtaining perfect knowledge. Only knowledge about reality is not sufficient for realisation of Brahman. The fact about reality is first to be heard, thought and meditated upon. These three steps are summoned sravana, manana and nididhyasna. By controlling the body, the senses and the mind, one can concentrate on the Highest Reality and through this concentration one can obtained perfect peace. Bhagvad-Gita defines the characteristics of the Jnana-yogi thus:

He who abandons all desires and acts free from longing, without any sense of fineness or egotism, he attains the peace.

(Bhagvad Gita, Chapter II Verse-71)

Swami Vivekananda has also been influenced by Gita. He attempted to present its lessons in a more realistic and rationalistic way. When a person concentrates fully on that reality, then all the visions of unreality disappear. After that, he is in a status to realize that there is no distinction between Atman and Brahman. This way of obtaining perfection is summoned Jnana-yoga because in this yoga, an individual gets perfection only through knowledge.

Dr. Radhakrishnan also describes the nature of the Jnana- yogi thus.

When all beings are attracted by the glitter of sense- objects, the sage is intent on understanding reality. (Radhakrishnan 128)

Swami Vivekananda remarks.

Karma-yoga, therefore a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works. The karma- yogi need not believe in any doctrine whatever. He may not believe even in God, may not ask what his soul is, nor, think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realising selfishness, and he has

to work it out himself.

(Mayavati 111)

He says that the system of Raja-Yoga is not something mysterious. He observes:

It is wrong to blindly believe. You must exercise your own reason and judgement, you must practise, and see whether these things happen or not. Just as you would take up any other science, exactly in the same manner you should take up this science for study. There is neither mystery nor danger in it. So far as it is true it ought to be preached in the public streets, in broad daylight.

(Mayavati 16)

Conclusion

Finally Vivekanand has spoken about the physical help we can extend to needy people. He states that physical help is of least important because it cannot give permanent satisfaction. The misery that I feel, when I am hungry is removed by eating, but hunger returns; my misery can cease only when I am satisfied beyond all Want (Vivekananda 40).

Hence, wants never stop to torture human beings. The only solution over all his problems is to become spiritually strong and go beyond all the wants.

In this way, prolific post-independence Indian writer like Swami Vivekananda has intensely handled his favourite theme of inculcating moral sensibility in the world. According to Vivekananda the miseries in the world cannot be cured by physical help only. Until man's nature alters his physical requirements will always arise and miseries will always be felt and no amount of physical help will remove them. The only solution of the problem is to create mankind pure and spiritually strong and make them educated. Difficulties and miseries in the world will come to an end.

Works Cited:

Chavan, S. P. *Compromise as a Survival Strategy in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande: A Critical Study*. SRTM, University: Nanded, October - 2011. 4. TS.

Gupta, Mrs. Dr. Surma Das, *Development of Moral Philosophy in India*. London : Green & Co. Ltd. ,1961.

Mayavati: *Complete works of Swami Vivekananda vol-1 Advaita Ashrama*. Almora: Himalayas Eleventh Enlarged Edition, 1962.

Mayavati. *Vivekananda Swami: Jnana-yoga Advaita Ashrama*, Almora: Himalayas Twelfth Impression, 1970.

Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *The Beginning of the Indian Novel. An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*. Ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra. Delhi: Permanent Black.

Narayan, R. K. 1963. Qtd. K. R. Srinivasa lyenger. Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.

Radhakrishnan, Dr.S.. Translated. The Bhagvadgita, Chapter11, Verse 71. India : Blackie & Sons Ltd. Fourth Indian Reprint,1976.

Ramamurti, K. S. 1987. Rise of the Indian Novel in English. New Delhi: Sterling.

Satchidanandan, K. 1999. Indian Literature: Positions and Prapositions. Delhi: Pencraft International. Print.

Sharma, L. C.. (revised and edited by Stanly M. Daugert).Ethical Philosophies of India. London: Allen & U; rr ; in Ltd., 1963.

Vivekananda, Swami. Karma Yoga. Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 1896