

Vivekananda's View on Humanism

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Abstract: *The concept of humanism is a core concept. Human being has social as well as moral values. The concept of humanism had elaborately been discussed by many contemporary Philosophers like Rabindranath Tagore, M. K. Gandhi, M. N. Roy. Vivekananda is one of them. He is one of the important social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy in the Bengal Renaissance. We have gained many concepts related to humanism from the ancient scriptures like- 'Bahujan hitaya, Bahujana sukhaya' (For the welfare, peace, and happiness of the many), "Samadarshana" (Vision of sameness), "Sarva bhutahita" (For the welfare of all beings), "Samya" (Equality), "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (The whole universe is one family), etc. these are all vividly enumerated in our ancient scriptures, are also the sources of humanism in modern India. Vivekananda was emphasized on Seva to the poor people. Vivekananda believed that God not only exists in a mandir or girza or a mosque but that God always exists everywhere. Vivekananda believed that all types of social welfare are for the sake of the human. He coins the word **Daridranarayana**, God in the form of the poor, and asked us to serve them. So this paper is highlighted to show the different angles or points of humanism.*

Keywords: Bahujana hitaya, Bahujana sukhaya, Freedom, Equality, Fraternity, Harmony, Vedantic Vision, Casteism and untouchability

In an inspiring poem "To A Friend", Swami Vivekananda gives the pride of place to 'love' for all human actions. Even prescribed spiritual practices enjoined on by varied systems are termed by him as delusions of the mind. Instead, he recognizes 'love' or 'Prema' as the essence of everything, and to him, this 'love'; is the highest God of gods. As this love is the highest god, and it is manifested palpable in every being, so one who loves a living being without any selfish motive serves or worships God. And this worship through love is at its highest when it is offered to the poor in whom God manifests himself most prominently offering the opportunity to those who can serve them.

In a letter we find that Swami Vivekananda's feelings for the poor masses played an important role in the formation of his gospel of selfless service, "My brother, given all this, especially of the poverty and ignorance, I had no sleep...I hit upon a plan: we are so many sannyasins wandering about teaching the people metaphysics-it is all madness. Did not our Gurudeva use to say, 'An empty stomach is no good for religion?' That those poor people are leading the

life of brutes is simply due to ignorance. We have for all ages been sucking their blood and trampling them underfoot.”¹

Vivekananda was mainly influenced by Practical Vedanta. In his lecture on “Practical Vedanta”, he said, “The living God is within you, and yet you are building churches, temples and believing all sorts of imaginary nonsense. The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body”.² He quotes, “Jive prem kore Jai Jon sei Jon Sebiche Isvara.” That means at first you love men then you can gain the love of God. So we find several clues of Vivekananda's Philosophy on the concept of humanism from his various writings and lectures. Vivekananda upheld the Vedantic vision of man as essentially divine, as a creature not meant for nature but to conquer nature. Vivekananda's message to the men that, peace, unity, harmony, fearlessness, renunciation, service, etc. indicate the path of survival in the fear-stricken world. These are all marks to know Vivekananda's notion of humanism.³

Ancient India was a full spiritual country. Spiritualism is in our soul and mind. The Indian thinkers were very much influenced by the humanistic ethics of ancient India. Swami Vivekananda was one of them. Swami Vivekananda was a monk, guru, disciple, Vedantist, prophet and patriot. In India, Swami Vivekananda was one of the early pioneers of the idea of Humanism. He has tirelessly worked for India's regeneration, only one because he was born in India, but also because he has seen that his rich spiritual culture would be the greatest gift to world culture. He was a man of compassion and affection. Vivekananda was an extraordinary genius. His extraordinary mind has many facets. He was a philosopher, educationist, social-reformer, cultured and above all a humanist. His ideas and ideals have great relevance to the current problems challenging India and the world at the present day. He was a prophet who has preached the Indian culture, the secret of world peace, friendliness, and equality. These types of features can be seen in the whole philosophy of Vivekananda. His Philosophy was a message for social action with an emphasis on unselfish service.

Among many modern thinkers, Vivekananda served as a link between the Renaissance and the modern period. He was the most effective exponent of the Vedanta in the modern age and develops it into a very strong and inspiring philosophy that impressed every great man of his time as well as the general masses. His single aim was to retrieve Indian society from the apathy and inaction into which it had sunk and to infuse life, hope and vigour into all sections of the community. With a message of love, tolerance and service to mankind, Vivekananda could infuse a new hope in man. He realized that the crises of India were due to the decline of Vedic religion and the 'Indians' apathy towards the spirit of humanism. So he made up his mind, to re-establish the Vedic-Upanishadic tradition in such a way that it proves itself to be truly relevant to the modern era. His philosophy may be called Neo-Vedanta, which was scientific, humanistic, universal and in tune with the demands of our modern age. Thus his construction of Indian philosophy was an attempt to interpret the doctrine

of Advaita as an answer to life's problem.

Vivekananda was influenced by several European philosophers like Hegel, Hume, and Comte etc. But he did not forget 'East.' Vivekananda was strongly influenced by the Vedanta. He accepted Vedanta because he believed that Vedanta tries to bring social equality and oneness in society. Vivekananda stood for the universalism of Vedanta, accepting the Upanishadic teaching that creation represents the sport or Lila of God. His Advaita philosophy recognizes the unity of all religions and asserts the basic principles of the divinity of man, and the essential spirituality of life. This truth, he thought, should guide all fields of the socio-political life of the people. His views on society were essentially and practically humanistic and it was based on his tremendous faith in the power of man. This aspect of humanism can be seen in the whole philosophy of Vivekananda. Hence his philosophy may be considered as a form of humanism. He opposed the oppressions based on caste distinctions and the practice of child marriage. He strongly urged providing opportunities for women to enable them to utilize their abilities. His philosophy was a message for social action with an emphasis on unselfish service. In a certain sense, Vivekananda is influenced by Buddhist philosophy. In this context, Vivekananda says, "The great glory of Buddha lay in his wonderful sympathy for everybody, especially the poor and ignorant."⁴

Power by reason, the Renaissance humanism and, more emphatically, Enlightenment humanism, in their concern for human well-being, rejected the religious and the spiritual and emphasized only the material well-being. But Vivekananda did not reject material well-being because his material well-being was a prerequisite for spiritual quest. Not only so, for Vivekananda, but religion was also to play a positive role in one's life. For him, "If a religion cannot help man wherever he may be, wherever he stands, it is not of much use; it will remind only a theory for the chosen few. Religion, to help mankind, must be ready and able to help him in whatever condition he is, in servitude or freedom, in the depths of degradation or on the heights of purity; everywhere, equality, it should be able to come to his aid. The principles of Vedanta, or the ideal of religion, or whatever you may call it, will be fulfilled by its capacity for performing this great function."⁵

Enlightenment humanism has dissuaded women and men from God. Renaissance humanism has also distanced itself from God to some extent. These schools were solely concerned material needs of mankind. On the other hand, Vivekananda did not isolate women and men from God. He attempted to bring women and men closer to God and his thoughts were pegged on the principle of 'Divine in Man'. In one word, "This ideal is that you are divine, 'Though art That', *Tat-tvam-asi*."⁶

Man's Nature:

Vivekananda's concept of man and practical Vedanta moulded his humanism

mostly. Swami Vivekananda discloses his religious temperance in his attitude to the human body, heart, head and soul. He expresses his religious faith in the human body which is higher than all other animals and even all the angels. He explains his conviction in the superiority of the human body on account of its power to attain perfection. For him, "Human body is the greatest body in the Universe, and a human being is the greatest being. Man is higher than all animals than all angels; none is greater than man. Even the Devas (God) will have to come down again and again to perfection through a human body. Man, alone attain to perfection, not even the Devas."⁷ Vivekananda makes a clear-cut distinction between Real man and Apparent man. He says, "The real man, therefore, one and infinite, the omni-present Spirit. On the other hand, apparent man is only a limitation of that the Real Man."⁸ Vivekananda going a step further explains where this distinction lies. He says, "...The apparent man, however great he may be, is only a deem reflection of the real man who is beyond. The Real Man, the Spirit, being beyond cause and effect, not bound by time and space, must, therefore, be free. He was never bound, and could not be bound. The apparent man, the reflection is limited by space and time and causation, therefore bound".⁹ He further says, "When a man has none more self in him no possession, nothing to call "me" or "mine," has given himself up entirely, destroyed himself as it were- in that man is God Himself; for in him self-will is gone, crushed out, annihilated, that is the real man or ideal man."¹⁰ Vivekananda says, "Each man is the infinite already, only these bars and bolts and different circumstances shut him in; but as soon as they are removed, he comes out and expresses himself."¹¹ He further says, "You are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect being, you divinities on earth- sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature."¹²

Means of Salvation:

Vivekananda stresses the importance of the human body as a means to reach the ultimate goal, salvation. Vivekananda, after his vain search for various gods outside himself, comes back to realize that the God, whom he is searching for in hills and dales in every temple, in the churches and the heavens lies within himself. "I am He and He is I. None but I was God, and this little I never existed."¹³ He further claims, "The living God is within you, and yet you are building churches and temples and believing all sorts of imaginary nonsense. The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. Of course, all animals are temples too, but man is the highest, the Taj Mahal of temples. If I cannot worship in that, no other temple will be of any advantage. The moment I have realized God sitting in the temple of every human body, the moment I stand in reverence before every human being and see God in him- that moment I am free from bondage, everything that binds vanishes, and I am free."¹⁴ He remarks in "Practical Vedanta"/ You may build a temple in which to worship God and that may be good, a better one, a much higher one, already exists, the human body."¹⁵

Universal Oneness:

The central idea of Vedanta is oneness. It means, there are no two lives or two worlds. He Said, "...the one central ideal of Vedanta is this oneness...There is but one life, one world, one existence. Everything is that one, the difference is in degree and not in kind. The Vedanta entirely denies such idea as that animals are separate from men...Oneness includes all animals. If man's life is immortal, so also is the animal's ... A God who is partial to his children called men, and cruel to his children called brute beats, is worse than a demon. I would rather die a hundred times than worship such a God."¹⁶ Oneness is the secret of everything. All is one. He further says, "There is only one life and one world, this one life and one world is appearing to us as manifold. This manifold is like a dream. When you dream, one dream passes away and another comes. You do not live in your dreams. The dreams come one after another...All this manifoldness is the manifestation of that one. That One is manifesting Himself as many, as matter, spirit, mind, though, and everything else. It is that One, manifesting Himself as many. Therefore, the first step for us to take is to teach the truth to ourselves and others."¹⁷

Here Vivekananda adopts the Vedantic analogy of 'Pratibimba.' Vivekananda says, the universal soul is present in all beings. Through one, it is seen as many like the sun in water, but the real sun is always the one. "There is, therefore, but one¹ man, oneself, eternally pure, eternally perfect, unchangeable, and unchanged; it has never changed, and all these various changes in the universe are but appearances in that oneself."¹⁸ Vivekananda proceeded further from the brotherhood and harmonious relation among all beings to the oneness of all. Vivekananda had wanted such a society where each man will introduce himself as a brother. In this society, there will be no difference between me and you. To this place, I and you are the same. This is Vedanta Oneness. This Oneness leads us to me and thou.

Daridra- NĀrĀyan:

For Swami Vivekananda 'Man is God, he is nārāyana.' Swami Vivekananda said that everybody should be respected, including the poor. Vivekananda cried for the hungry, for the ignorant, for the suppressed, for the miserable of all nations and creeds. Indeed, poor people are not all respected and given importance. They are treated like senseless creatures. Perhaps Swami Vivekananda was the first Indian to use the word Daridranārāyan. Its means, 'God manifested in the poor.' According to him, everything is part of God. Poor people are the image of God. To serve the poor people means you serve God. Vivekananda said that you have seen different people like- poor Indian, Chandal Indian, un-educated Indian that all are my brothers. He quoted- '*Bahurupe sammukhetomâr chârđi kothâ khujicha Ishwar/ Jive prem kare jei jan, sei jan sebichelshwar*' that is to say, where do you search after God? He is present before you in myriad forms; One who loves all beings serves God. He further says, "I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted

earthly enjoyments. I must see my machine in strong working order, and then knowing sure that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep, without caring what will be next; and my I will be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the total of all souls- and, above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship."¹⁹

Here we can find similarities between Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. Vivekananda popularised the word 'Daridranârâyan (God manifested in the poor). Gandhiji popularized the word 'Harijan' which means 'The people of God.' But they are called Dalit. Gandhiji struggled throughout his life for humanity and human dignity. He says, "If need be somebody may cut me into pieces, still I cannot avoid my company of the Dalita."²⁰ He further says, "The Swarâj of my dream is the poor man's swarâj. The necessities of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by princes and monied men."²¹ "The Swaraj of my dream recognizes no race or no religious distinction... Swaraj is to be for all."²²

In a letter we find that Swami Vivekananda's feelings for the poor masses played an important role in the formation of his gospel of selfless service, "My brother, given all this, especially for the poverty and ignorance, I had no sleep...I hit upon a plan: we are so many sannyasins wandering about and teaching the people metaphysics-it is all madness. Did not our Gurudeva use to say, "An empty stomach is no good for religion?" That those poor people are leading the life of brutes is simply due to ignorance. We have for all ages been sucking their blood and trampling them underfoot."²³

Stress on Sevâ:

The Philosophy of Vivekananda is a gospel of humanism, for man is the central pillar of his life and teachings. Man, manliness, man-making these were the constant mantra on his lips. In Vivekananda's speech, we find the term service or sevâ. The Ramakrishna Mission which resulted from the inspiration of Vivekananda developed into a humanitarian organization with the sole motive of service to mankind and alleviation of human suffering. He says, 'To help others is to help one's self.' Vivekananda's notion of service was ultimately spiritualized as a duty towards God, because every individual, for him, was the embodiment of God and God cannot be helped out of sympathy, but only served out of a sense of love. He proclaimed, "You cannot help anyone, you can only serve...if you have the privilege...."²⁴As man service was service to God, the giver of service should feel blessed in getting an opportunity to serve. Swami Vivekananda said, "Let the giver kneel and give thanks, let the receiver stand up and permit."²⁵This was his distinct service.

Vivekananda's Four Fundamental Concepts Regarding Humanism:

Vivekananda believes in unity in diversity, which is based on four fundamental

concepts- i) His faith in the divinity in man, ii) His theory of universal acceptance and tolerance, iii) His ideal of universal religion and (iv) conception of *Yoga*. These are all discussed below one by one-

Divinity in Man:

According to Vivekananda, there are three aspects of human life. These are – a) *Sila* (physical aspect), b) *Chitta* (mental aspects) and c) *Prajna* (intellectual pursuit or divine possibilities). *Prajna* is the highest growth of human development. It is true that the concept of humanism, for Vivekananda, bears a unique stamp of individual power and potentiality. In this context, Vivekananda said, What is the individuality of man? Not Tom, Brown, but God in man. This is the [true] individuality. The more man has approached that, the more he has given up his false individuality. The more he tries to collect and gain everything (for himself), the less he has thought of himself, the more he has sacrificed all individuality during his life...the more he is an individual.²⁶ Vivekananda says, 'Each soul potentially divine.' The divine power is already embodied in the human mind. But it is covered by ignorance. Ignorance makes us hate each other. In this context, Vivekananda says, "The man who gives way to anger, or hatred, or any other passion, cannot work: he only breaks himself to pieces and does nothing practical. It is the calm, and forgiving, equable, well-balanced mind that does the greatest amount of work."²⁷ Due to ignorance man does not realize his divinity. When the veil of ignorance is replaced by right knowledge man realizes his divinity. Such a divinity makes man chivalrous and catholic. So, Vivekananda says, "You can do anything and everything, you are almighty."²⁸

Universal Acceptance and Tolerance:

Vivekananda's conception of humanism had tried to achieve international solidarity and brotherhood. '*Visvam ekam nidam*'- The world is a nest. The burning example of universal acceptance and tolerance is seen in Chicago through his speech in America which was held in 1893 from September 11 to 27 at the art institute. His speech began with, "Sister and brother of America". Got him a standing ovation at the summit and Set the tone for the later ones. "I am proud to belong to a religion which taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance." He said "but we accept all religion as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions all nations of the earth."²⁹ He had also warned against the dangers of sectarianism and bigotry:

Sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. Hoping that all persecutions with the sword or with the pen would end.

Thus, Swamiji's concept of universal acceptance and tolerance leads to Ahimsa or non-injury. Ahimsa or non-injury is another concept of Vivekananda's Philosophy. What is Ahimsa or non-injury? Never producing pain by thought, word and deed in any living being, is called Ahimsa or non-injury. He says, "Do well if you can, but do not injure the world."³⁰ He further says, "The idea is not to eat flesh, not to injure any being, for all animals are my brothers. If you can think of them as your brothers, you have made a little headway towards the brotherhood of all souls...."³¹

Here, we can find similarities between Swami Vivekananda and Jain Philosophy. Jainism, another heterodox system of Indian thought is highly ethical which gives room for many lofty humanistic ideals. Ahimsa or non-injury is a key concept of Jaina ethics. Ahimsa or non-injury in thought, word and deed including negative abstention from inflicting positive injury to any being, as well positive help to any suffering creature. Jana's ahimsa was not only for man. But it was for the whole organic system.

The ideal of Universal Religion:

Vivekananda stressed that religion is a necessity of life. What is Religion? Vivekananda says, "of all the forces that have worked and are still working to mould the destiny of the human race, none certainly is more potent than that, the manifestation of which we call Religion."³² For him, religion must ensure the dignity of man and happiness to all the members of society. God is indeed the centre of all religions. We live and move in God. The essence of religion is in the realization of God. There are different religions in the world, but these goals have the same. Vivekananda wanted unity or fusion of all religions into one universal religion. The sole objective of Universal Religion is nothing respect for religious diversity and acceptance of religious pluralism. Vivekananda's Universal Religion was based on the belief that God manifests himself through all beings. Vivekananda says religion is like a vehicle that makes a journey from lower truth to higher truth. He recognizes all religions as different paths to the same truth. In this context he says- "As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee." There is only one God."

Vivekananda's universal religion was essentially a creative religious tolerance which broadens that liberal principle into a spiritual ideal and accepts all religions as but different manifestations of man's approach to Truth and God."³³ He rightly states that "God, through everywhere, can be known to us in and through human character. We reject none, neither theist, nor pantheist, nor monist, nor polytheist, nor agnostic, nor atheist; the only condition of being a disciple is modeling a character at one the broadest and the most intense. Nor do we insist upon particular codes of morality as to conduct, or character, or eating and drinking, except so far as it injures others. Whatever retards the onward

progress or helps the downward fall is *vice*, whatever helps in coming up and becoming harmonized is a *virtue*." Thus, Vivekananda strongly believes that religion helps individuals to march towards the Truth by living a harmonized life. "By universal religion, he does not mean a religion that will have one universal philosophy, or one universal mythology or one universal ritual."³⁴

Here naturally two questions arise. The first question is, does universal religion exist? And the second question, Is Universal religion possible? Vivekananda replies that universal religion already exists. It exists in minds of those who even while sticking to their religion, their ancestral faith, look upon other religions with sympathy. Vivekananda says, 'if one religion is true other religions will be the same.'

Universal religion is possible only to the extent that there is a conception of universalism in which there is a place for all religions suited to different types of humanity. There are different types of people who live in the world. Their mentality, habits, rituals and beliefs differ from each other. All these various minds and various types of people are needed to the society. That was a basic assumption of universal religion. He proclaimed it, in the following way, "Our watchword, there will be acceptance and not exclusion, not only tolerance but acceptance. I accept all religions that were in the past and worship them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhists temple where I shall take refuge in the Buddha and law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu which trying to see the light that enlightens the heart of everyone."³⁵ Universal religion as Vivekananda perceives is a discovery of universality in all religions. The universal religion of Swami Vivekananda is based on the extracts of different religious truths freed from dogmas, sacraments, rites and ceremonies. Vedanta, he thought, was the most suitable philosophy to establish harmony between different religions. In this context he says, "Different religions emphasize different qualities of religion and such, it is not possible to find the common elements. Islam, for example, emphasizes universal brotherhood, Hinduism on Spirituality, Christianity on self-purification for entering into the kingdom of God."³⁶ Here, Vivekananda would like to say that, it is true that all these religions differ from each other or individual to individual, and yet the universal religion is present there.

Universal religion, according to Vivekananda, is not a new religion with a new scripture and a new liturgy. It is a new approach to religion, a new spiritual and moral temper. It not only enjoins tolerance, but it also urges acceptance of other religions as true thereby making religion a principle of human unity. Universal religion as Vivekananda perceives is a discovery of universality in all religions.

Concept of Yoga:

Vivekananda says, that the one who believes in universal religion has to be broad-minded and open-hearted. Another feature of universal religion is that it has to be acceptable to all minds. Vivekananda stresses that the ideal religion must harmoniously balance all the aspects of religion such, as *philosophy, emotion, work, mysticism*, etc. "And this religion is attained by what we, in India, call Yoga-union. To the worker, it is the union between men and the whole of humanity, to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self, to the lover, union between himself and the God of love, and the philosopher, it is the union of all existence. This is what is meant by Yoga,³⁷" The aim of Yoga is union, the realization of oneness. Here we can say some names who had accepted Yoga, namely Tilak, Sufis, etc. They are very much alike. If not the same. For Tilak 'Yoga' means control of mental impulses by breath control or mental absorption or meditation. A term has been used by the Sufis which is called 'Fana'. It means the "union with the Supreme Being."³⁸ In his lecture on "Karma Yoga," he said, "Be grateful to the man you help, think of him as God. It is not a great privilege to be allowed to worship God by helping our fellowmen."³⁹ In his lecture on "What is Religion" Swamiji said, "Let us be no more the worshippers of creeds or sects with small limited notions of God, but see Him in everything in the universe. If you are a knower of God, you will everywhere find the same worship as in your own heart."⁴⁰

Casteism and Untouchability:

At that time India's culture was sunken in superstitions namely caste, sex and untouchability. In the history of humanism, Vivekananda was known as a social reformer. He struggles throughout his life for caste, creed and untouchability. Swami Vivekananda's humanism was irrespective of caste, creed and untouchability. He wrote, "In India there are two evils, trampling on the women and grinding the poor through caste restrictions."⁴¹ The sole aim of his reform movement was to enable the lower groups of society to evolve into the spiritual level of the higher group. For him, casteism and the untouchability system were based upon inequalities. In fact, for him all men are equal. Equality is based on the Vedanta doctrine of the equality of all beings. When we realize that everything is the same, identical, one reality, we attain freedom. What is freedom? Freedom according to him is spiritual freedom which includes individual as well as social freedom. On the foundation of individual freedom, Vivekananda wanted to reconstruct society towards the realization of such ideals like tolerance, love and unity. Therefore, Vivekananda pleaded against untouchability and casteism.

Uniqueness of Swami Vivekananda's Humanism:

The humanism expounded by Vivekananda was intensely human and universal. But it is also something more than human. For it derives its strength and sanction

from the ever-present and inalienable divine spark in all men and women. This constitutes its uniqueness. Man's strength and knowledge can be either destructive or constructive they can give him and his fellow human beings life and love, and joy and peace, or death and hatred, sorrow and unfulfillment. Which of these two a man will choose primarily depend on the spiritual development, the consciousness level, and secondarily on his economic and social environment. The first President of India, Rajendra Prasad noted that it was Vivekananda who could set the skeptic mind of the west at the rest in the spiritual arena. It is remarked, "The ideal he stood for made universal brotherhood of man and understandable proposition to a world which was wedded to colour prejudice, having its route in the slavery of man. His spiritual approach roused the conscience of humanity all over the world and he succeeded in bringing home to the West the greatness of the Vedic civilization."⁴²

If the human consciousness functions at the sensate level and the level of the ego presiding over man's organic system, man can scatter only tension and peacelessness around him. But if it functions from the deeper level of this divine dimension, he will become a focus of love, peace and fearlessness around him. According to Ranganathananda, a humanism that is strengthened and sustained by the ignition of the divine spark in man is far different from the current humanism of the west, including its scientific humanism.⁴³ Vivekananda believed in the kind of humanism that is founded in the Devine and His power. There is a universality and dynamism in his humanism and its energies are entirely positive and never negative.

This is the strength and range and relevance of Vivekananda's Vedantic humanism. He accepts the human situation, man as found in society. He also accepts the need for the manipulation of his socio-political conditions, up to a point, to ensure his growth and development. But he insists that man must evolve and steadily unfold the higher divine possibilities hidden within him. This is echoed in modern biology in the concept of psychosocial evolution, of evolution rising from the organic level to the ethical and moral levels. Vivekananda would appreciate the remark of the western thinker Victor Hugo that "we are not men yet but only candidates to humanity".⁴⁴ If man's inside is tense and tumultuous, it means that he has not overcome fear; it means further that he cannot be a guarantee for the peace and fearlessness of the rest of the world. Vivekananda highlights that humans have not yet realized the power with which they are gifted. The world has advanced in scientific discoveries. Still, scientists feel that they have not utilized their power completely. It is absurd to think that humans are weak. Forgetfulness of human power causes many sufferings in the world. He points out that humans have understood little of their abilities. They must realize that each person is an ocean of infinite power and blessedness. This understanding must become part and parcel of every human being. Vivekananda brings out the nature of human beings and calls everyone to reflect on it. He puts it in this way, "I am the birthless, the deathless, the blissful, the omniscient, the omnipotent, ever-glorious Soul."⁴⁵ He places it as

the life-giving force for all. He believes it will set persons in action for the good of all.

Vivekananda instead that every man, woman, or child to be under physical, mental, or spiritual training to become strong by knowing the truth. He believed that it is truth alone that gives strength, and truth alone gives life.⁴⁶ Spiritual strength is the quintessence of the Vedas and Vedanta. Vivekananda worked all his life with great spiritual strength. Therefore, he recommended courage and strength as the cure for all troubles. The solution to all human problems lies in man's becoming a new man in all his dimensions. It is this new man, pure in heart, clear in the brain, unselfish in motivation, who works in a balanced manner with his head, heart and hand. He has to shed all his smallness and illusions. A man who has experienced the unity of existence in his expanded consciousness, this selfless, spotless and fearless man of character, enlightenment and love, in the hope of the world. It is the realization of the true nature of one's self in love and peace blooming in the world.

Freedom, Equality and Fraternity:

Another important view or concept of freedom, equality and fraternity are associated with the concept of Humanism. Humanism directly or indirectly established equality and the attitude of fraternity in society. The faith of Vivekananda in the inherent divinity of the individual made him keep society at an arm's length from the individual. The individual would serve the society and become one with it not because of social compulsion but because of his innate urge for promoting social good as an ethical self-obligation. The supreme end of the individual is freedom and he expends his freedom by promoting the freedom of others. Hence, Vivekananda's approach is neither individualistic nor socialist in the strict sense of the terms.

Vivekananda held that even though laws are indispensable in social life, too many of them can only be destructive of liberty. He says, "This life is a tremendous assertion of freedom, and this obedience to law carried for enough, would make us simply matter-either in society, or politics or religion....Whenever in any society there are too many laws, it is a sure sign that the society will soon die."⁴⁷ But this does not mean that he stood for the abolition of laws in social life for he said that when we live in society, we have to comply with its rules and regulation. Again, Vivekananda believed that there is a wide difference between laws as codified in books and their operation in practical life. When the government of a country enacts codes of laws, it must lead to the welfare of the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, the king and the subjects alike.⁴⁸

In the philosophy of Vivekananda, liberty stands for the removal of all those shackles that hinder the manifestation the true nature of the individuals. These shackles are created by ignorance; ignorance leads to all sorts of privileges and inequalities. By 'liberty' Vivekananda means a system of positive opportunities and rights. This is clear from his definition of liberty which runs as follows,

“Liberty does not certainly mean the absence of obstacles in the path of misappropriation of wealth etc., by you and me. But it is our natural right to be allowed to use our own body, intelligence or wealth according to our will, without doing any harm to others, and all the members of the society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education, or knowledge.”⁴⁹ Liberty, therefore, means in concrete terms certain positive rights- ‘rights to use one’s own body’ includes rights to life, rights to freedom of movements; ‘right to use one’s intelligence’ includes rights to education, freedom of thoughts and expressions; and ‘freedom to use one’s wealth’ includes the property right.

The complementary relationship between two concepts ‘liberty’ and ‘equality’ is based on the Vedanta doctrine of the equality of all beings. When we realize that everything is the same, identical, one reality, we attain freedom. If the two ideas of liberty and equality are complementary, it is clear, that we can attain the true meaning of equality. Both must be attained simultaneously. Then the life of the individual is enriched by them. Every state, every society must take efforts to guarantee them both at the same time. “That liberty without equality is no liberty, is proved in the capitalist countries with formal democracy, that equality without liberty is no equality, is proved today in the socialist states, where there is a cry for liberty and democracy.”⁵⁰ Fraternity, in the Vedanta viewpoint, signifies the ‘inner oneness of all. Vivekananda, superseding the idea of universal brotherhood by universal selfhood, had given the idea of fraternity a high position. For him, fraternity is the rationalistic way of life-the Dharma. A fully enlightened person feels one with the entire humanity and therefore international cooperation is a part of his dharma. The proper role of the state as the agency of society lies in promoting this cooperation.

Concluding Remarks:

The concept of ‘Humanism’ is an ancient concept. It is based on morality and ethics. Humanism is associated with the concept of Ethics. There is a difference between West and East culture. Renaissance and revolution are occurred in the society not only based on Western culture but also Indian culture or tradition. Among many Indian thinkers and social reformers, Vivekananda is another one. Vivekananda is highly influenced by Vedanta Philosophy and tries to realize that there is one and only one reality. He opined that there is no difference between Jiva and God. In this regard, he said, “**Jive prem kare jei jan sei jan Sebiche Isvara**”, which means- at first you loved the Jiva then you can get the love of Isvara. He always emphasized on to serve or Seva to the poor people and tries to protect the position of women in Indian society. He said God manifested in the poor and love to the poor people is the key of humanism. Vivekanda said that universal acceptance and tolerance, fraternity, freedom, equality are all associated with humanism and he is trying to establish all these in society. As a social reformer, he reduced the inequality between men based on the caste system. He is tried to omit the system of untouchability. He mainly emphasized love, fraternity, freedom, equality, acceptance, tolerance for establishing real

humanism in society. And his great concept of universal religion is much more important. He found the uniqueness and integrity of all religions in the universal religion.

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