

CHAPTER - IV

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VIVEKANANDA'S MEMORABLE SPEECHES IN THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS AT CHICAGO

After his wanderings, Vivekananda heard about the Parliament of Religions, which was to be held in Chicago in 1893, he expressed his desire to attend it, thinking that it might help him in carrying out his divine mission. And at last with the help of Maharaja of Mysore, the Raja of Ramnad and the Raja of Khetri, Swamiji sailed for America from Bombay on 31 May 1893.

Swamaji reached Chicago at the end of July. Arriving there he was shocked to learn from the Information Bureau that the Parliament of Religions would not commence until September and that no delegate would be admitted without proper credentials from a bonafide organization. Moreover, the time for admittance and registration of delegates was already over. The Swamiji did not foresee the difficulties in the way, as he was sure and he was moving towards the fulfillment of the divine mission.

He spent those days with very difficulties. But fortunately, with the help of miss Katherine Abbott (who invited Swamiji in her home to

live), Mr. J.H. Wright, a Professor of Greek at Harvard University (who gave him opportunity as a delegate of the Parliament of Religions) and Mrs. George W. Hale (who took Swamiji to the office of the Parliament of Religions), Swamiji succeeded to attend the 'Parliament of Religions'.

On The Platform of the Religions

The Parliament of Religions was an adjunct of the World's Columbian exposition, which was held in Chicago in 1893 to celebrate the four hundred anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. Some of the declared objectives of the Parliament were to present the important truths held and taught in common by different religions of the world and to bring the nations of the earth into a more friendly relationship. But many thought and hoped that the Parliament would prone the superiority of their own religion over the others.

We shall now present the soul-stirring lectures of Swamiji in short.

At the world's Parliament of Religions

Chicago, 11th September, 1893.

The first session of the parliament was held on Monday, 11th September 1893, in the spacious hall of the Art Institute. In the afternoon, he stepped up to rostrum to speak. Others had addressed to the audience in the customary manners but when Swamiji addressed them as 'Sister and Brothers of America', he had touched the deepest chord of their heart by discarding formality and stressing the kinship of all people. He began his lectures with thanks to the monks of the world, the mother of religions and also millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects. He added that he was proud to belong to a religion which had taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. He was proud to belong to a nation, which had sheltered the persecuted, and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. He was also proud to belong to the religion which sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation and the purest remnant of the Israelites which was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. Then he uttered the few lines from a hymn which is every day repeated by million of human being: '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'.

He continued that sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendent, fanaticism had long possessed this beautiful earth. They had 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 was then? But he perversely hoped that the bell that tolled that morning in honour of that convention might be the death-knell of all fanaticism of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.

On the 15th September and there after Swamiji spoke on the sectarian narrowness in the field of religion, universal oneness of Vedantic Philosophy Catholicism of Hinduism belief in the immortality of soul, teachings of the Vedas, Vaidic conception of God as immanent and 'God as transcendent', and also about Buddha and his teachings. This Swamiji gave a pen picture of religious teachings of both the East and the West. In his concluding speech Vivekananda said that he was not in favour of conversion, what he wanted was to become a better follower of that faith to which he belonged. Swamiji said, "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".¹

Vivekananda's address cleared up a few ideas. He was deadly against any kind of religious fanaticism narrowness bigotry, conversion from one faith to another and any religious false claim of superiority over other religious. Another thing that we note in his addresses is this: he boldly asserted the spirit of tolerance in Hinduism the Catholic Spirit in Hinduism a generous out look about all religions and a hope for a better world where no conflict could dominate rather a spirit of tolerance and acceptance would be the guiding principal for the progress of mankind.

New-Vedanta

Accordingly, Swami Vivekananda has given new meaning to the Vedanta:

- The old Vedanta said that one who did not believe in God was an atheist, the new Vedanta says: He who does not believe in himself is an atheist. For new Vedanta material and spiritual development are conjoined. Work and worship go together. The inner and outer dimension of a person must be balanced in a pleasing harmony. The new approach does not believe in a God who promises a person eternal bliss in heaven but cannot give him read here. Practical

Vedanta is an active spiritual quest-not letting things happen, but causing them to happen.

- Another important contribution of the New Vedanta is its practicality. It replaces humanitarian ideals of compassion and charity with the spiritual precept of service to the living God dwelling in the hearts of all beings.

The New Vedanta is available to all regardless of caste, colour, or race. Its practice does not require a person to have a male body and Brahmin birth, or to live in the seclusion of the forest.

Advaita Vedanta would surely be misunderstood if it were thought that it considers the universe unreal in the crude sense of illusion or *Maya*. It maintains that this world is not what it seems to you now. It is infinitely more glorious, infinitely more real, infinitely more lovable and enjoyable than what we take it to be. What can be more realistic than this? The scientific mind will avidly grasp at this idea. Let us go on and on in our understanding, and the world will at last reveal itself as the embodiment of all that we are consciously and unconsciously seeking for. Only at a certain stage of our research, we shall have to change the laboratory instruments with the mental instruments of meditation and contemplation, concentration and

Tapas, and then the eternal secret will reveal itself to us.

As Swami Ashokananda says, "We thus consider Advaita Vedanta to be the hope of the present age. For it alone can successfully transform the dominant tendencies born of science and, through this, rehabilitate morality and religion. The true reconciliation of science and religion lies in their agreement not only in doctrines but also in the mental attitudes implied. Advaita Vedanta fulfills both these conditions. In it lies future of both science and religion, and if it fails nothing will succeed."

The Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda

In one of the lectures he gave in this country Swami Vivekananda said, "A *Sannyasin* cannot belong to any religion, for his is a life of independent thought, which draws from all religions; his is a life of realization, not merely of theory or belief, much less of dogma." Even to call Vivekananda a "Vedantist" is to put a label on him unjustly.

What, then, do we mean by the Vedanta of Shankaracharya or of Ramanuja or of any other *Acharya* ?

We mean the emphasis, something indicated by the Sanskrit word *Darshana*, the outlook special to that particular person. We wish to outline and discuss here some nine salient points which could be considered the special features of Swamiji's Vedanta.

Before we do that, let us first point out what seem to be mistakes often made in approaching the life and thought of Swamiji. If we can first clear the ground of these mistaken preconceptions, our step into Vivekananda-land will be sure.

1. That he was at times unfaithful to what Sri Ramakrishna taught: his message seems to be quite different.

In the first place, the Master never told Narendra that he was to be a "clone" of himself. He often stood in awe of the height and breadth of his disciple's mind. Secondly it must be remembered that they had very different audiences. Ramakrishna spoke to the Western-educated, but still very Indian in background, Calcutta residents, whereas Vivekananda addressed crowds of Americans and Europeans, products of the Renaissance, of Science and of Western Philosophy and Theology. In Vedanta the message is guided by the nature of the recipients.

2. That Swamiji got his Humanism, Socialism, Organizing Methods etc. from his experience in the West.

By reading his life in detail one soon discovers that he was studying, and thinking about the ideas of Hamilton, Herbert Spencer, Tyndall, T.H. Huxley and others and how to use them, long before he left for the West. He was, even in his college days, familiar with philosophers like Hume and Hegel, and an avid reader of John Stuart Mill.

3. That he was "only" the Master's messenger, not a spiritual power in himself.

Nothing could be further from the fact. Sri Ramakrishna gave him the power accumulated by his own *Sadhana*, on one fateful day at Dakshineswar, remarking afterwards, "Now I have become a mere fakir." Swamiji too, challenged by one of his brother-disciples, declared unequivocally, "While I am on earth Sri Ramakrishna is working through me."

Now let us turn to what I would call Vivekananda's most significant and distinctive teaching. We shall put those under nine headings:-

That truth is Brahman alone

This differs a bit from Sankara's "*Brahman* alone is real; the world is false." Swami Vivekananda said that the greatest name man ever gave to God was Truth. "My mission," he explained to an interviewer in London, "is to show that religion is in everything and is everything." He told us that drama and music and art are by themselves religion; that any song, love song or whatever, will lead to liberation if one's whole soul is in that song. Most surprisingly, he said "I am a materialist in a certain sense, because I believe that there is only One. That is what the materialist wants you to believe; only he calls it matter and I call it God, Brahman." He knew from his own experience, when, after the touch of his Master, he went into the streets and saw that everything, before him was God. So much for nature. As for the soul, "There is only one individual," he said, "and each of us is that." Atman is Brahman.

The ultimate realization is identity with Brahman

Here he shows himself the orthodox Advaitan. No compromise can be accepted. "Stop not until the goal is reached," he urged. What is the goal? That pure identity, attained only by fearlessness, which is why he talked so much of fearlessness. "That God, for whom you have been searching all over the universe is all the time yourself -- your self, not in the personal sense but in the Impersonal." And when

others appealed to Ramakrishna that this sounded like egotism, the latter replied, "Naren can say that."

"The eternal, the infinite, the omnipresent, the omniscient is a principle, not a Person. You, I and everyone are but embodiments of that principle and more of it is embodied in a person, the greater is he and all in the end will be the perfect embodiment of that, and thus all will be one, as they are now essentially..." He told us we are born monists; we cannot help it, because we always perceive the One.

All paths are grounded in Advaita and fulfilled in it

This is what will prevent us from being fanatics: that man goes not from error to truth, but from lower truth to higher truth. When Swamiji spoke about Sri Krishna and the Gita he cautioned, "You must worship the self in Krishna, not Krishna as Krishna." He shows the all-inclusive nature of Advaita when he says that it accepts dualism and all systems that preceded Advaita. This is the universal solvent into which all philosophies must merge at last. This is not "inclusive-ism" or triumphalism as is sometimes alleged. It is said: "Without the Vedanta every religion is superstition (including 'Hinduism'); with it everything becomes religion."

Religion should be presented rationally

This is just what Swami Vivekananda did in his speeches at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. It captivated the audience, which was tired of emotional harangues from sectarian prelates. Vedanta of all persuasions has always prescribed *shravanam*, *mananam*, *nididhyasanam* -- hearing the truth, mulling it over, and meditating upon it; here was Vivekananda telling us not just about his own faith, but about all faiths. Had anyone done this in this way before? "If one religion be true," he pointed out, and then all the others must be true." "What happened once in history must happen again..." That was the scientific attitude. He said that the study of religion can and should be pursued on exactly the same basis as the pursuit of any other science. "Everything religion claims must be judged from the standpoint of reason," and when people replied that human reason was weak, he told them "a body of priests would be even weaker!" He dared to say to his own disciples at the head monastery in India, "Only those portions of the Vedas which agree with reason are to be accepted as authority," and also warned them, regarding the *Guru*, "Worship your *Guru* as God, but do not obey him blindly; love him all you will, but think for yourself."

All truths should be made available to all people

"What I want to propagate," Swamiji said, in his lecture "The Ideal of a Universal Religion," "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... and this ideal will be the nearest approach to a universal religion." Particularly he drilled this into the ears of his fellow Indians. "The most wonderful truths confined in our Upanishads, in our Puranas, must be brought out from the books, brought out from the monasteries, from the forests, from the possession of selected bodies of people and scattered broadcast over the land, so that these truths run like fire, all over the country." "Advaita," he said, "shall no more be a secret... it must come down to the everyday life of the people." It has to enter the palace, come from the cave to the cottage, to the beggar -- everywhere. The oppressed -- the outcast and the woman were to fear no longer. "Let the new India arise, from the man who grasps the plough, from the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler, the sweeper..." And in London he made this prediction: "The power of religion, broadened and purified, is going to penetrate every part of human life ... it will live in our every movement, penetrate every pore of our society, and be infinitely more a power for good than it has ever been before."

Everyone should embody all phases of truth

By this the Swami did not mean that there would no longer be specialists: he meant no more exclusiveness. What the age needs is the all-rounded person. "Would to God," he said that all the elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion and work were equally present in full! That is my ideal of the perfect person. Everyone else ...is one-sided, and this world is almost full with these 'one-sided' people, with knowledge of the one road only in which they move; anything else is dangerous and horrible to them. To become harmoniously balanced in all these directions is my ideal of religion." On rare occasions he would point to his Master as the example of this: e.g., "It was given to me," he told the Madrasis, "to live with a man who was as ardent a dualist, as ardent an Advaitin, as ardent a *bhakta*, as a *jnani* Swamiji fortunately provided his own fine example: another such well-rounded prophet is difficult to discover. He was a master at stating accurately the views of another. He was a musician, and in the West took lessons in painting and in the French language. "We are of a new type," he told his listeners; "sometimes dressed like gentlemen, we are engaged in lecturing; at other times, throwing all aside ...ash-clad, we are immersed in meditation and austerities in mountains and forests." This same idea he applied to the form his work was to take: "I haven't been born," Swamiji remarked, "to found one more sect in a world teeming with sects."

All paths are to be made active in the service of man as God

Let us suppose that we want to do charitable work; in that case what Swami Vivekananda tells us is: "Never approach anything except as God." "It is our privilege to be allowed to be charitable, for only so can we grow. The poor suffers that we may be helped; let the giver kneel down and give thanks, let the receiver stand up and permit." "Feel that the receiver is the higher one. You serve the other because you are lower than he, not because he is low and you are high." The relation of all this to the overcoming of ego is obvious. "Philosophy and yoga and penance... --all these constitute the religion of one person or one country; doing well to others is the one great universal religion." Swamiji told his own disciples, "Know this for certain: he who will work will be the crown on my head." "What is India, or England or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called MAN." Now if this activity of service is to be expressed through all paths, then we are again reminded of our first point: that drama, music and art are by themselves religion. What Vivekananda preached he carried out? In his lecture to an American audience in San Francisco, entitled "Is Vedanta the Future Religion", he confided: "You are the Personal God. Just now I am worshipping you (in speaking). This is the greatest prayer."

That man-making was his religion

What does he mean by a man? A human being, of course. "Great men," Swamiji said, "are those who build bridges for others with their hearts blood." That was the austerity for this age, not so much the forest penances and meditations, but the building of character through karma-yoga, is what is needed today. What India in particular now wanted was "muscles of iron and nerves of steel", which nothing could resist, which could penetrate the mysteries of the universe, and accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face. Quoting or paraphrasing some verse of poetry he said, "We shall crush the stars to atoms and unhinge the universe. Don't you know who we are? We are the servants of Sri Ramakrishna!" One can sometimes feel that Swamiji's God was Man; "Read Man," he said, "he is the living poem." It is not humanism. It has a much larger definition.

Worship the Terrible

This, in a way, is the most "personal" of these distinctive accents in the message of Vivekananda. He used to say, when speaking of Kali, that she, whom at first he could not accept, had become the Power

that now moved him. "Two or three days before Sri Ramakrishna's passing away she whom he used to call 'Kali' entered this body. It is she who takes me here and there and makes me work... I feel that that Power is constantly directing me." Aside from being personal to him, how is it an injunction for all of us? "Each is responsible for the evil anywhere in the world." No one can really "shut the door where evil dwells"; everyone has to face, eventually, that being whose hands hold good and bad, sweetness and terror. She, the even-handed Mother, was the chosen Ideal of Ramakrishna, and Swami Vivekananda had to make out the significance of it and carry this to the world. "Worship the Terrible," meant for him and us, no fear even of death; to see in the world of today the tremendous play of energy, showing its splendors in every way, understanding it as the Power of Brahman Itself.

SWAMI VIVEKNANDA AND MODERN PROBLEMS

He was one of the "Seven Sages", brought down by Sri Ramakrishna for the good of the world. What are the implications of this, for our society today? As I study him I see him as a mind of the first order, applying itself not only to the traditional science of the spiritual life, but to all human problems, as far as he encountered them. We have an important question here: Should philosophers become kings? i.e., how far into society as an organism should one go who is vowed to be "out of society?" Does his detachment make for better wisdom? The Greeks usually said 'yes'. The Hindus usually no. Swami Vivekananda, however, was more than a traditional Monk: he was patriot and prophet as well, and in this respect joined in his own body of thought both Eastern and Western elements.

Swami Vivekananda is one of the very few *Sannyasins* to turn his mind to more than just "religion," and he has spoken on many of the issues of his day which remain issues for ours. Importantly, he looked upon religion itself as "the fulfillment of the perfection in man." He was a great humanist, who picked up European social ideas and fleshed them out with philosophic underpinning and implication. As a prophet he foresaw the twentieth century as the age "of labor and the *Sudras* and of women", predicting the rise of Russia

and China. He also said the Indian ideas would go to every country under the sun and, before long, become a component of their many forces. It should be obvious by now that the Western world's dream of attaining happiness or permanent success through materialism has been a failure. Certainly Vivekananda did say, "Bread first; then religion," but for those who have too much bread? What about them? It is fine to have computers and color television, but do we not see that it is the Orient alone which has understood the finer dimensions of happiness? It is never in the machine; it is in the human mind. This was his message.

Today we find ourselves in a world beset with horrendous problems and dilemmas, and we have not yet evaded the threat of nuclear war. What does Swamiji have to say to us? It plays out on two levels: first as he addressed the problem on the level of the problem; and later, how he made us look behind it.

Let us begin with Crime and Public Morality

The facts are that punishment for crime often foments more crime than it prevents. The enforcers of law are as often corrupt and unlawful as not. And we could go on and on.

"If it is social opinion that makes us moral, then really we are little better than animals," he said. "It is inner strength only that can curb the vicious tendencies." He told Indian boys, "You will be nearer to God by playing football than by studying the Gita." "Strength is the medicine for the world's disease." He encouraged athletic and bodily development in all who were effete. How sad he would feel, now, to see the dearth of Indian Olympians at the games, and the commercializing of sports!

Swamiji saw crime as the result, not only of the injustices to the society, but more the lack of self-esteem in the individual, and the impoverishment of higher ideals. He compared the social fabric of India with that of America, and felt that the Indian marriage system, in spite of its glaring injustices, was superior to the promiscuity (already rampant in his day) of the romantic West. He was getting wind of the license Freudianism was going to bring. He did not try to be a Manu, defining particular codes of conduct. Following his Master, he could prescribe for human nature only turning our base impulses in a higher direction: there was no other solution. "Consciously or unconsciously," he said, "that Indian idea of the divinity within everyone will express itself even in other countries." Behind the drunkard, behind the abuser, he saw the crushed and struggling divinity. "Do not seek help from anyone. There is only one sin: weakness. Be strong, physically, mentally, morally."

Family break down.

We have known for long that just producing valedictorians and spelling geniuses is not enough to warrant the continuity of high culture. According to Vivekananda: "It is the culture of the heart, really, not that of the intellect, that will lessen the misery of the world." "It is culture that withstands shocks, not learning! And we are finding that our children face many shocks, more every day. To the Christians he said, "Make yourselves decent people...Be chaste and pure...There is no other way. Did Christ find any other way? 'Except ye become as a little child, ye may not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'" He told us how to love a wife or a husband: "It is not our love that makes us miserable, but the fact that we want love in return." Always give, do not demand, he said. Swamiji was not a "reformer" in the sense of pulling down social systems. He approved the idea of a caste system, but not the latter-day applications of it; with proper amendments he thought it good for a society.

As to family coherence, he knew that "those who cannot discipline themselves cannot control their children and pointed out the folly of expecting the offspring not to follow their parents' conduct.

What we would like others to do, we had better do, ourselves

Health care

Sri Ramakrishna had been eclectic in his resort to methods of medical practice. He used to say that the Ayur Vedic treatments were good for the "*Satya Yuga*", the days of the *Rishis* when time was abundant. They worked too slowly for modern times. But when stricken by cancer at the end, he would let all the schools of medicine try their hand! Swami Vivekananda too, in his approach to health and treatment, felt that all types of health management could be tried. He had no high opinion of what governments could do in the matter; they had to take a role, of course, but when all the evils of corruption, inefficiency, waste and callousness which attend bureaucracy were taken into account, how much could health be improved? Again, that idea of strength: "No disease can get a hold in you unless you are weak, and allow it to do so." We do not know for sure, but can surmise that in today's health controversies he would encourage prevention over cure, immunity over medicine, natural alternatives over pills, and spiritual practice to eliminate mental and physical dependence. There are hints of these, throughout the Swami's conversations.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND MODERN PROBLEMS

(CONCLUDED)

Environmental pollution and denigration

The problem was scarcely recognized at the end of the nineteenth century, but one can extrapolate from nearly all that Swamiji said about life styles and conspicuous consumption. He was a realist and knew very well that we cannot have something for nothing. "The misery of the world is like chronic rheumatism chases it from one area, it shows up in another," he said. If he were here today to face the problem in its ripest stage, there is little doubt that he would be an "environmentalist", and surely would remind us that we are going to be the inheritors of our own mess, allowing the Hindu doctrine of reincarnation. And one may imagine the almost acid tones with which he would refer to the population explosion and accent the role of self-control in its solution.

The same is true of fiscal irresponsibility. Do you remember that he upheld the value of the caste system as regards its original ideal and concept? That the caste member who attained to wealth or status was under the *dharmic* obligation to help raise the whole community from which he had raised and which had launched his struggle? Then how

can we provide only for our own offspring? That would be adopting the nuclear family framework of the West, not the best to emulate, in his mind. "Freedom is the first condition of growth;" he forcefully remarked one day, "what you do not make free can never grow." This applies to employees and dependents as well.

The question of male dominance and woman's status.

This defect the Hindus share with all the world's peoples, he acknowledged, as there is scarcely a culture which has not succumbed to it. He was one of the first of his era in the field of religion to recognize the indignity and oppression which woman was subject to, in this world of men. He had seen and studied the misery of his own sister, a suicide, and it had deeply affected his thinking. "If woman cannot act, neither can man suffer," he said; a fact now well-known in the statistics of psychology. There were times when Vivekananda's mind was dwelling in a transcendental realm, and those times gave rise to expressions like these: "There is neither man nor woman [in Vedanta], for the soul is sexless... It is a lie to say that I am a man or a woman, or I belong to this country or that. The entire world is my country, because I have clothed myself with it as my body."

Such was his sense of identity at that moment. He never tired of brushing off the well-meaning concerns of men who would ask him about "women's problems": "Hands off!" he exclaimed, "Women will solve their own problems." Men had no business attempting to solve them for them.

In the United States he made a very interesting comment. He said, "American men profess to worship woman, but in my opinion they simply worship youth and beauty. They never fall in love with wrinkles and grey hair." By worship of woman, Sri Ramakrishna had meant, he assured us, that to him every woman's face was that of the Blissful Mother and nothing else. At the same time he could clearly see that in America alone there was now the social freedom to rise up and take equality with men. Swamiji met many women in the West, patrons, admirers, helpers, disciples and with all of them he dealt in his own natural and spontaneous way. They sometimes expected of him the gallant chivalry of that Victorian era, but he flatly refused. "You can take care of yourself," he would say; "you are as able as I am, if not more." Swami Vivekananda was prophet enough to foresee what the twentieth century would bring. We can sum up the subject in his broad but telling generality: "Asia laid the germs of civilization. Europe developed man. America is developing woman and the masses."

Lack of religious identity

On this subject Swamiji had much to say. His years of wandering over his Motherland brought him to summarize what he considered the "Common Bases of Hinduism." These were: Belief in God (he once said with a bit of exasperation, "The Hindus can never give up His Majesty, the Lord of the Universe!"), belief in the Vedas as "revealed," the cyclic nature of time (*yugas* and *kalpas* in the macrocosm, reincarnation in the microcosm), and belief in all religions as valid paths because of the divinity of the human soul. Rather a minimal list, when one stops to think about it.

As regards scripture, Swamiji declared: "The proof of religion depends on the constitution of man, not on any books." What was the role of religion for a Hindu? "Religion, to help mankind, must be ready and able to help him in whatever condition he is." Then is there any place there for caste?

Above all, the Hindu is certain that we never go from falsehood to truth, but only from truth to truth. Be convinced of these and you are a Hindu.

Reference

1. Chicago address, *Advaita Ashrama*, 1893 Page 40.