

CHAPTER - VI

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NATURE OF VIVEKANANDA'S NATIONALISTIC OUTLOOK

Vivekananda's anarchistic ideal of Brahminhood makes the way for the emergence of a spiritual society. He was of the view that spirituality constituted India's Individuality. As India was spiritual he felt that its social and political institutions must be national and spiritual. It was for that he advocated India's spiritual nationalism.

Vivekananda was of the view that nationalism is conducive to the growth of internationalism. He firmly believed that nation's growth and expansion depend on cultivating international outlook and contact and mutual exchange of knowledge. As a nationalist, Vivekananda championed -

- i. The spiritual renaissance of India.
- ii. Advocated India's spiritual nationalism and
- iii. Established his place as a patriot of the patriots by identifying himself with the masses of India with the religious spirit of oneness.

As the leading soul of the spiritual renaissance of India, Vivekananda pioneered the past and present traditionalism and modernism to mould modern India's future. Pandit Nehru said, "Rooted in the past and full of Pride in India's prestige, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and present."¹

Vivekananda ejaculated India's self-respect and rejuvenated faith in her spiritual glory and unity. He urged his compatriots to disseminate his spiritual truths to the high and the low and expand his national institutions. By invoking the national ethos and touching the chords of his spirituality, he vindicated India's spiritual unity and freedom more spontaneously and effectively than his social and religious contemporaries. None of the Indian reformers before him conceived the idea of common nation on the grounds of spirituality. Vivekananda stood foremost in pleading for India's spiritual freedom. The reforming religious sects and social movements confined their thought and activity only to reform Hinduism and Hindu Society. They lacked the initiative and perspective of projecting a united India and creating national consciousness on the basis of spirituality. Their activities only convinced Vivekananda that they were accelerating the process of India's degeneration and denationalism.

Vivekananda felt that enslaved India could be liberated neither by social reform nor by political means but only by religious revival. He pointed out that in India, "Social reform has to be preached by showing how much more spiritual a life the new system will bring; and politics has to be preached by showing how much it will improve the one thing that the nation wants - its spirituality".² He also reminded the social reformers that her religious teachers maintained social dynamism by weeding out social evils without attacking her national institutions and beliefs. Therefore he believed that the remedy for India's degradation was not social reform but religion which encouraged individual and national growth.

Vivekananda exhorted that the programme of national revival should be chalked out with moderation. He pointed out that it must avoid the extremes of national fanaticism of religious and social orthodoxy and blind infatuation. Vivekananda felt that limited rigidity and flexibility should be adapted in the process of national revival. He stood for growth and not replacement of her national soul or individuality. He advised his countrymen: "Stand on your feet, and assimilate what you can, learn from every nation, take what is of use to you. But remember that as Hindus everything else must be subordinated to our national ideals".³

Of all the mentors of the Indian Renaissance, Vivekananda propagated with untiring energy and enthusiasm the incandescent spirituality of India which constituted her national growth and vitality. To the inactive, exclusive and degenerated India, he showed the heights of its majestic culture and Philosophy and the depth and eternity of its spiritualism. He infused faith and strength into the nation.

Vivekananda rightly observed that each nation has a mission and a message of her own. "Just as there is an individuality in every man. So there is a national individuality - each nation has a destiny to fulfill, each nation has a message to deliver, and each nation has a mission to accomplish."⁴ Therefore it was his mission to revise the eternal teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads to strengthen the nations growth and faith in its individuality.

Vivekananda pointed out that there can be no regeneration for India unless it regained its spirituality. When her spirituality was least in oblivion and subjected to derision, it was mulish to think of her independence. He was of the view that India relegated her religion and lost her freedom. He felt that India by neglecting her faith and will weakened itself and was enmeshed in social, political and spiritual servitude. Therefore he flooded India with the Vedantic message of strength, fearlessness and freedom. Thus Vivekananda

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held that India would become dynamic and strong by cultivating faith in her Vedantic, the impersonal religion.

According to Vivekananda, there is a significant distinction between a people and a nation. A people become a nation when it comes to be imbued with 'a national purpose'. Thus to Swamiji, a people with a national purpose, whether the purpose has any political significance or not, is a nation. The Indian people are a nation because they clearly exhibit political significance altogether from his notion of nationhood. Spiritual Independence is the most essential element of the Indian national life. "This is our national purpose."⁵

But can a national purpose as this, which is devoid of political significance alone make a nation? The Swamiji's answer to this, "The whole difference between the West and the East is in this: They are nations, we are not.....why was it so easy for the English to Conquer India? It was because they are a nation, we are not?"⁶ Hence India, with freedom of religion as the theme of its life, was not exactly a nation in his eyes.

MARX, VIVEKANANDA ON NATIONALISM

In this context we can compare the views of Marx and Vivekananda on the question of nationalism. The Nineteenth Century was a period of great national upsurge all over the world. In spite of the fact that nationalism was striking deep roots at the time, Marx devoted comparatively less attention to it than one would expect probably he did not realize the full significance of the national sentiment, pre-occupied as he was with the economic aspect, as distinct from its emotion aspect. Another reason may be that both Marx and Engels were internationalists and as such, did not sufficiently appreciate the sentiments behind nationalism.

On the contrary, Swami Vivekananda was an ardent nationalist, in spite of his being an all-renouncing Sanyasin. The servitude, under which his motherland was reeling at the time, must have definitely intensified his national feelings. The legitimate pride which he had in the glorious past of his country also contributed to the sentiment, as is evident from all his speeches and writings.

According to Marx, the origin of nations is to be sought in the play of economic forces. Nationalistic feelings emerge during the slave and the feudal period. They are extremely unstable, with the development of capitalism, economic disunity was gradually eliminated and a single

market emerged as a result of which nationalistic turned into the nation-state.

Marx and Engles were internationalists. They believed that nations were a phenomenon of the capitalist age. Marx declared, "Make the workmen of different countries not only feel, but act, as brethren and comrades in the army of emancipation".⁷

Swami Vivekananda's approach to nationalism was quite different. It was a cultural, not an economic approach. He was of the view that every nation is born, not created. Every nation is born with a mission to fulfill. Vivekananda does not agree with Marx that the central theme of every nation is economic, for some it may be economic, for some others, it may be politics or social life. In the case of India, it is religion. "Here in this blessed land, the foundation the backbone, the life centre is religion".⁸

But both Marx and Vivekananda were truly internationalists, though with that difference that Marx wanted nations to disappear and merge in a single world humanity and Vivekananda wanted each nation to grow to its full stature and strength, by remaining steadfast to its life mission, what ever it is and thereby contributing all that it is capable of, to the seem total of world's growth and fulfillment and human welfare.

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