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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AS A NATIONALIST: A DE-CONTEXTUALISED STUDY OF HIS POEM “HOLD ON YET A WHILE, BRAVE HEART”

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Abstract

Vivekananda offered Indian nationalism a spiritual foundation and claimed that as both religion and spirituality are a part of India's cultural legacy, they must be protected and preserved. By restoring India's original glory, which is ingrained in its spiritual energy, he attempted to inspire new hope and inspiration among the populace. India, in Vivekananda's opinion, is the birthplace of spirituality. In his view, the source of power is spiritual realisation. A person with a strong mind will be able to solve any challenges. It will eradicate hatred for everyone and bring about peace, joy, and religious harmony. Realising the divinity within the soul, in his opinion, is the essence of true religion. Any fear or animosity would vanish after coming to this realisation. Although he was not a direct political spokesperson, still his idea of nationalism is evident in his speeches and writings. The present article seeks to find out his idea of nationalism by de-contextualising one of his poems ‘Hold on a yet a while, Brave Heart’. His message of keeping positivity, have faith in oneself even in distress can be interpreted to understand his very zeal and urge for Indian freedom. His continuous quest for the upliftment of Indians and restoring their self-belief is drawn out of this poem.

Key words: *Nationalism, Spirituality, Positivity, Poem, Self-belief*

Introduction

Western civilization viewed Indian religion as a collection of superstitions, bad organisations, and rites and practises that were filled with immorality. The Chicago address of Swamiji opened the eyes of the west. Swamiji's speeches helped them to understand the significance of Hinduism. This important address boosts Indian pride internationally. Strength, self-reliance, self-dependence, courage, resolve, dynamism, and patriotic fervour were among the traits that Swamiji emphasised as being needed in his people. He believed that having these traits will help them grow both personally and physically. Even though Swamiji had no interest in politics, he shed some insight on some political theory concepts. Swami Vivekananda was a true nationalist in heart and spirit. (Panda,2014) Democracy was always preferred and promoted by Swamiji. He thought it was the ideal form of governance. This rule maintains individual freedom. People have the chance to develop under this system, which encourages them to move forward in the direction of growth. "Liberty, equality, and fraternity" was the revolutionary cry of the French Revolution, which Swamiji held in the highest regard. He believes that liberty refers to a system of rights and opportunities, not the absence of barriers to the misuse of wealth and authority. He intended to guarantee everyone the freedom to use their own bodies, minds, and resources without interfering with

others in society. He was a staunch supporter of individual liberty. According to Vivekananda, a person should have unrestricted freedom to develop freely and independently. He argued that every member of the community should have equal access to riches, education, and information. He views equality as the denial of all special privileges. Everyone will fight for his own salvation, he declared, and there would be no special treatment for anyone. Vivekananda made the connection between freedom and equality and India's traditional Vedantic religion and the Advaita school of thought, which affirms the divinity and solidarity of every human being. "All beings, whether great or small, are equally manifestations of God," he said. Only the manifestations differ. Swamiji demonstrated that there is no room for any special privileges for any group or part of society in the context of spirituality. He aimed to end social and economic inequalities. He used the word "revolution" to refer to a spiritual and moral revolution, which is the only kind that has the power to drastically alter human civilization. Human nature will undergo a significant alteration as a result. In his ideal universe, there would be no caste or class distinction, according to Swamiji. Without any demerits, it should be a mixture of all the distinct classes' qualities. In his mind's eye, a perfect society would exist in which the Shudras' egalitarian ideal, military culture, priestly knowledge, and commercial and commercial and military prowess would all be incorporated without introducing any negative elements. Swamiji aimed to create an egalitarian state based on knowledge, culture, and economic progress. Regarding the leadership in the liberation movement, Swamiji stated that the characteristics of a good leader should include selflessness and responsibility. India is fervently loved in Swamiji's works. He served as an inspiration to all outstanding leaders in India. He was referred to by the country's authorities as India's national patriot saint. Aurobindo and Gandhi freely acknowledged that Swamiji had a positive influence on them. Vivekananda, according to Mahatma Gandhi, strengthened his love for his country by a thousand times. The eminent poet Rabindranath said that Swamiji's addresses motivated Bengali youth and reawakened their sense of duty and service to the country. Tagore was a big admirer of Vivekananda's ideas on how to raise young people with good character. Vivekananda had a strong belief in the next generation. Youth, in his view, are the sturdy pillars of the country. By focusing youth energy, the nation would be revitalised. He believed that young people have the potential to lead the nation. But in the interim, he gave the young people advice on how to guard against moral decay, an excessive materialism, and slavish emulation of western culture. He emphasised the value of our religious traditions to them. He foresaw that a mechanical nationalism, busy with apportionment of spoils, cannot have a lasting effect. (Adityaraj, 2018)

Objective: The objective of the present study is to decipher the nationalistic aspects of Swami Vivekananda by dissecting one of his poems. The poem 'Hold on a yet a while, Brave Heart' has been analysed by in a de-contextualised way so as to procure the essence of his nationalistic view. The paper seeks to understand his works through the lens of nationalism and construct meanings beyond the contexts.

Methodology: This is a qualitative study based on understanding of Swamiji's work with existing theoretical perspectives. The qualitative methods involved are thematic analysis and discourse analysis. This research is solely subjective in nature and involves personal explanations to consolidate the objective specified.

Significance of the Study: This study is significant because it reveals Swamiji's nationalistic viewpoints through his writing. Although numerous research in this field have been conducted, it has not yet been accomplished to decontextualize one of his poems in order to comprehend his patriotic viewpoint. This study provides an opportunity to look into his writings from a close reading standpoint. Most of his writings hold a positive psychological underpinning that might be relatable to his nationalistic zeal or intent existing in him.

Vivekananda's Notion of Nationalism: Swami Vivekananda held distinct views on Indian nationalism and freedom. He took an ethical or spiritual view towards freedom. The nationalism of Swami Vivekananda is associated with spiritualism. (Tyagi, 2015) Swamiji was quite direct in criticizing the

Christian missionaries who took to proselytizing Indians without a full understanding of the social and material conditions that plagued them. Swami made a distinct look at embracing the Hinduism that was intrinsic to India. Rather than seeing it as a form of paganism or something that was demonic in many aspects of the West, Swami reverted back to this tradition in advocating a unique form of nationalist identity. Swami spoke of the Advaita Vedanta within Hinduism, the oneness of spiritual identity. When Swami speaks of Hinduism, he articulates a vision that is universal in its reach. The nationalism theory created by Swami Vivekananda is founded on religion. Like in music, each country, in his view, had a primary note or central theme in contrast to which everything else was subordinate. According to him, India's central topic was religion, which needed to become the foundation of the country's culture. Any nation's future greatness could only be constructed on the pillars of its past greatness. When political authority weakened, religion assisted in restoring and bolstering it as a creative force of unity and stability. Thus, he promoted structuring national life around a religious ideal. In his vision he conceptualized the undivided India. Where complete concept of nationalism is explicit. Like Bankim, he also imagined India as a mother figure and urged the youth of India to come together for breaking the shackles. Bhupendranath Dutta, Jadugopal Mukherjee even Maa Sarada felt the importance of Vivekananda in Swadesi Movement. Many books of Swamiji like Bartaman Bharat, Prachya and Paschatya were found from the revolutionaries. He felt that true religious integrity and unity can extend the nationalistic outlook of the countrymen. He tried to infuse national unity by enhancing spiritual values and practices among the Indian citizens. He believed spirituality to be the core of nationalistic ideal. He himself was an epitome of Indian nationalism because as a nationalistic thinker he tried to educate the fellow countrymen about the bondages of British Raj. He emancipated human freedom, freedom from all sorts of bondage. His thoughts, speeches, writings highly impacted the nationalistic consciousness among the people of India. His notion of nationalism can be identified in the following points:

- Vivekananda held to the idea of spiritual nationalism, which placed emphasis on the compatibility of all religions and the spirituality of India. He regarded India as the spiritual hub of the globe and held that India's deep spiritual legacy represented the country's fundamental identity. Vivekananda argued that nationalism should take into account a nation's spiritual and cultural aspects in addition to its political and economic ones.
- He emphasised the concept of universal brotherhood and saw nationalism as a way to promote harmony and cohesion among many communities. He thought that genuine nationalism shouldn't breed hatred or a sense of superiority towards other races or religions. It should instead encourage a sense of unity among all people.
- He was of the opinion that nationalism should be practised in order to help humanity. In order for the nationalist movement to succeed, he emphasised the significance of seva, or selfless service. Without regard to caste, creed, or religion, Vivekananda saw everyone in his country cooperating for the good and advancement of society.
- He understood how important education is in determining a country's future. He thought that education should emphasise the formation of moral ideals as much as the acquisition of intellectual knowledge. With a focus on pragmatism and the holistic development of people, Vivekananda argued for an educational system that combines the best elements of Western and Indian traditions.
- He emphasised the significance of self-reliance and self-respect for the advancement of a nation. He urged Indians to become self-assured and proud of their cultural heritage. According to Vivekananda, for people to truly identify as nationalists, they must have a strong feeling of their own value and worth, which will allow them to make valuable contributions to the advancement of their country.

Context of the Poem: “ Hold on Yet a While, Brave Heart”

This poem is written by Swamiji for delivering a message of hope to his fond discipline Sri Ajit Sing, the king of Khetri. He noticed lack of valour in his discipline King who was engulfed by frustration and sadness. Therefore, Swamiji exhorts like Krishna who became the healer to Arjuna for overcoming melancholy and fight in the battle. Krishna played the role of a guide and master to bring Arjuna back to reality and be courageous. Here, Vivekananda doing the same thing who himself is the incarnation of Lord Krishna to make King of Khetri competent for fighting the odds and overcoming failure.

A Close Reading of the Poem “ Hold on Yet a While, Brave Heart”

The very title of the poem bears words like hope, optimism, courage, enthusiasm, bravery etc. This highly optimistic piece of poetry exhibits a message and bestows courage to the ‘brave heart’. From the title we assume that the poet is trying to inject spirit to overcome weaknesses.

Stanza 1

The literal meaning of the lines depicts the picture of the Sun being hidden sometimes behind the clouds. The sky appears gloomy but this is for a time being. The poet asks for holding for a while because the sun will arise again out of darkness. But the symbolic poem can be described from another dimension using the lens of nationalistic view of Swamiji.

We can understand the poem in a different way by hiding its context and relating this to the concept of nationalism. The starting of the poem with a gloomy pall can be seen as the gloom of the countrymen in the bondage of the British. The Sun, source of light and optimism, can be a symbolic expression of Freedom. So, freedom is being under the veil of clouds, the British rule.

If the Sun by the cloud is hidden a bit,
If the Welkin shows but gloom
Still hold on Yet a While, brave heart,
The victory is sure to come.

Swamiji proclaims to the countrymen to ‘hold on yet a while’ because this dark phase will be over and the victory of India by means of freedom will be achieved and is sure to come. He is probably asking his fellow countrymen to have faith in themselves. He is trying to introduce positive psychological

elements among Indians to fuel the spirit and quest for releasing their emancipated Bharat Mata from the bondage.

Stanza 2

This stanza reverberates the strain of Shelley “If winter comes can spring be far behind.” The simple explanation is that the lively summer follows the crude and harsh winter. He says a high wave has deep hollow underneath. There is darkness and sunrays are above this. The wave, the depth, the light and darkness make way for one another. High waves can not be formed only. So, the poet urges us to be steady and brave. If we see a shadow somewhere, it means there is light. We need to understand the existence of binaries: light and darkness, ups and downs, happiness and grief. The coexistence of these

No winter was but summer came behind,
Each hollow crests the wave,
They push each other in light and shade:
Be steady then and brave.

elements directs that there is hope even in great misery. It can be analysed that Swamiji is directing the countrymen how to be steady and brave. There would be hard times, times when there is no hope but we need to wait for the right hour. The countrymen in the service of emancipation need to be steady with their nationalistic zeal during hurdles. The people of India must gain the understanding that the darkest hour will be over in no

time and they need to hold their nerves with the spirit within and wait for that golden hour of freedom.

Stanza 3

This stanza uplifts the zeal of the people into a climactic note. Duties of life may appear painful, the duties which give us pleasure may be momentary but we need to carry on the spirit to thrive even our goal seems shadowy.

The duties of life are sore indeed,
And its pleasure fleeting, vain,
The goal so shadowy seems and dim.
Yet plod on through the dark, brave heart,
With all thy might and main.

Both joy and grief are momentary, fleeting. It may appear to the common people of India that the goal of achieving freedom is unattainable. They may feel depressed by their continuous service to motherland as no success is attained and bearing the torture of the rulers. But the poet appeals the countrymen to move on courageously with all valour and might. His words are like the sources of hope, light and lifeline for the activists who are selflessly emancipating mother India.

The paragraph seems to be a direct call to his countrymen. The duties of life may sometimes appear monotonous, the result may be hollow, shadowy and dim but we yet need to 'plod on through the dark'. 'Brave heart' probably a call to his fellow countrymen urging them use all their 'might and main'.

Stanza 4

The greatest preacher of Vedantic school, Swami Vivekananda asserts that no work which has a good intent never fails. To him the panacea for every odd is to have positive engagement with self and the

Not a work will be lost, no struggle vain,
Though hopes be blighted, powers gone,
Of thy loins shall come the heirs to all,
Then hold on yet a while, brave soul,
No good is e'er undone.

work. Meaningful work leads to ultimate happiness and success follows it. The continuous struggle of the Indians against the colonisers won't go in vain even if it seems perennial. He whispers the note of positivity by addressing "of thy loins shall come the heirs to all". The closing of this stanza is beautifully written, he asserts in the strain of The Gita "No good is e'er undone." He tries to convince fellow people that all the sacrifices are counted and these deeds will bring the coveted freedom.

Stanza 5

Apart from its surface meaning a relationship between his idea of nationalism and urgency to arouse a

Though the good and the wise in life are few,
Yet theirs are the reins to lead,
The masses know but late the worth,
Heed none and gently guide.

religion which is in sleep out of fear and cowardice are brought out. Such positive engagement of the poet through his poems definitely acclaims his interest in creating national identity of the fellow Indians. He goes on that there are few people who can lead us. He is asking these people to guide the countrymen although they are paid heed late. Not only countrymen but also the leaders, intellectuals are also called for to selflessly guide us. In a country like India illiteracy and negligence among people is a great vice. We

always fail to understand the pearls before our eyes and realize the worth afterwards. Swamiji by boosting the morale of the leaders asks them not get depressed by the less acknowledgement of the fellow people they will understand your worth in future. So, he says them to guide through even though they are paid less attention during their course of activities.

Stanza 6

With thee are those who see afar,
With thee is the lord of the might,
All blessings pour on thee, great soul,
To thee may all come right.

There is no fear as the great seers are with us. Those who are visionary, can see a far what you can't. Moreover, almighty God is always beside us (countrymen). Uplifting the great souls, He is ushering blessings to them. The poem is concluding on a positive note 'may all come right'. He himself was a visionary, he knew India will be freed. Freedom will be tasted in near future. What required is courage and patience. His words became true. The mighty hearts fought, with bravery and got freed eventually. His wish was fulfilled as 'All blessings pour' on Indians and freedom was achieved. The poem concludes on a note of positivity

and hope which was highly essential for Indians during the late 19th and early 20th century. This was the high time in the history of Indian freedom struggle.

Conclusion

The study seeks to find out the nationalistic principles present in Swami Vivekananda on the basis of reading and deciphering one of his poems in the contextualised platform. The poem itself is rich in vitality and positivity which has been explained in terms of Indian freedom struggle. A journey has been undertaken throughout analysing the poem so as to draw a relationship between Swamiji's quest for addressing the fellow countrymen during the British era and injecting hope for Indian freedom struggle. He never participated in Indian politics directly, but his words and writings mostly influence all the revolutionaries and the countrymen so that they can get resonance and attain freedom. Moreover, his solid presence and messages are rich enough to boost the morale of the countrymen in attaining Indian freedom. The poem depicts the picture from gloominess to the positivity. The Indian people were in sheer distress and hopelessness during the British era. But just like there is light behind the clouds. Swami Ji ignites hope among the Indian people to overcome all the odds and fight against the British and assures that victory is ours. It might be said that the poem was written on a different context, for the king of Khetri but if it can be analysed and explained on the basis of his nationalistic viewpoint it well addresses his concept and ideal of nationalism. He always focused on spirituality and religion as the basis of his theories. Here also through the verbosity overcomes every single odd and it can be explained from his poems. These are rich enough to analyse in the context of Indian nationalism. To conclude, it can be said that Swami Vivekananda was one of the greatest Indian nationalists present in the pre-independence era under the veil of Spiritualism and positivity whose presence not only ignited the revolutionaries, but also ignites the future generations to thrive against all the odds even in the post independence era. If we go through the poems, we will understand why we should love our motherland and how we can overcome every single problem associated with our country or ourselves. He also gives the Solution to all problems by highlighting the importance of self reliance, positivity and strength. In the concluding lines let us celebrate the words of this great soul, "Each nation has a destiny to fulfil, each nation has a message to deliver, each nation has a mission to accomplish. Therefore, we must have to understand the mission of our own race, the destiny it has to fulfil, the place it has to occupy in the march of nations, the role which it has to contribute to the harmony of races".

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