

Book Review

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF VIVEKANANDA AND INDIAN NATIONALISM

Author: **Sebastian Velassery**

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Review By

Dr. Sabu Thomas

Associate Professor in Politics

&

Aswini K

Final Semester BA (Political Science)

Government Brennen College,

Thalassery, Kerala

Indian philosophy is fundamentally based on concepts such as dharma, karma, samsara, reincarnation, dukkha, renunciation, and meditation, which ultimately lead to moksha or individual liberation. The Vedanta philosophy, which interprets the Upanishads, has had a significant impact on Indian society. Vedanta tradition was upheld in Indian spiritual culture too. It was Swami Vivekananda who popularised Neo-Vedanta in India. He was a truly great person who was able to comprehend both the western culture and the spirituality of India. His writings are a convergence of the East and west -from the magnificent Vedanta to Kant and Hegel. Swami Vivekananda was rightly referred to as the “spiritual father” of the Indian national movement because his renowned lectures in America and England laid the groundwork for the early Indian freedom movement.

Professor Sebastian Velassery’s book ‘social philosophy of Vivekananda & Indian Nationalism’ indubitably deciphers the historical and philosophical background of the rise of Indian nationalism and the influence of Swami Vivekananda on the same. The Author is an eminent scholar in philosophy, who has contributed more than six dozen research

articles in various national and international journals and anthologies. The author has turned the information he gained into a masterpiece work, which undoubtedly serves as a beam of light piercing through the darkness of modern society

There is no difference of view or conflict between a spiritual seeker and an ordinary student who wishes to learn more about Vivekananda. These groups' characteristics may differ, but they have remarkable reciprocity in their approach to Swami Vivekananda. The author explains how Swami Vivekananda's beliefs and philosophy emerged as a synthesis of many Hindu schools of thought, and how it influenced the growth of the social philosophy of Indian nationalism.

This book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter discusses the origin of nationalism in India. The author contends that the growth of nationalism cannot be explained without considering the continuation of the diverse ethos of the country, cultural milieu, and spiritual consciousness. He also explores the emergence of nationalism about the concept of India's war for independence. He systematically analyzes the concept of state. Various conceptions regarding the Vedic Rashtra contained in 'Aitareya Brahmana,' 'Taitriyasamhitha,' and Kautilya's views are compared and contrasted with the modern concept of 'nation-state.' The chapter goes on to analyze theories about the origins of the state and how they are represented in ancient Indian literature. By analyzing Bankim Chandra Chatterji, who promoted a militant nationalism against colonial regulations, he claims that the original Indian response to Indian nationalism was rooted in religious beliefs. The author looks to be delving into colonialism and identity politics.

The watchword for Indian nation-state development is spirituality and harmony. The question of how they found harmony has profound answers in the Upanishads. Different Indian philosophical systems describe the transcendent subjectivity of the self in different ways. There are primarily two points of view which are Non-dualism and dualism (Advaita) respectively. Vivekananda was a staunch supporter of Advaita Vedanta as taught by Adi Sankara. He was influenced by Advaita philosophy, and he conjures spiritual humanism in pre-independent India. By analyzing Swami Vivekananda's life and philosophy, the author concludes that Vivekananda held the concept of spirit to be the highest truth of man.

The significance of Swami Vivekananda on the development of nationalism in India is discussed in the second chapter. In this chapter, the author analyses Vivekananda as a person, a philosopher, and a

spiritual teacher. It is abundantly obvious from the author's theoretical articulation that Swami didn't confine philosophy to a purely spiritual framework but also applied it to material progress. He promoted the perfect blend of materialism and spirituality. Before citing Vivekananda as a proponent of caste mobility, the author elaborates on the history of social structure, the creation of castes, their intellectual context, and the transformation of varna into caste. Historically, caste was justified based on 'functional specialization,' but it later proved to be a cruel system. The division of labor based on birth rather than talent developed a deteriorative system. The author provides Vivekananda's stunning examination of several castes in which he believes skills exist in differing propositions and opposes the notion of caste superiority based on birth. Swamiji encouraged caste mobility so that when a person mastered a certain talent, he may be promoted to the succeeding caste. This chapter focuses primarily on Vivekananda's humanitarian philosophy and his notion of "Love among everyone." The great son of India promoted personal emancipation and social good as complementary to one another and saw spiritual enlightenment as a social activity. Vivekananda's virtuous philosophy is expertly described by the author, who also explains how young Narendra, under the influence of his father Vishvanath Dutta and grandfather Durgacharan Dutta, evolved into Vivekananda, or bliss of discerning wisdom, as Ajit Singh of Khetri titled.

The fact that Vivekananda reoriented India's spiritual tradition is what makes him so important. According to Swamiji, the Vedic tradition should also be applied in daily life. He promoted neo-Vedanta, which combines spiritual and material advancement. The material wisdom of Vivekananda is explained in the third chapter of this book, "Privileging Social Equality & Critical Appropriation of Tradition."

The fourth chapter discusses 'Indian Nationalism, Religion Pluralism, and Swami Vivekananda's Role.' This can be interpreted as the author's response to the query he posed in the first chapter. "Before the Independence movement, can we assertively claim that we had a concept like nationalism?" India created the idea of nationalism during the war for independence. In Indian society, there was diversity. Minorities required representation as well. The following passages from Vivekananda's speech at the Universalist Church in Parsedenia, California demonstrate his support for religious diversity.

*"Our watchword, then, will be accepted, and not excluded.
Not only toleration, for so-called toleration, is often blasphemy,*

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and I do not believe in it. I believe in acceptance. Why should I tolerate it? Toleration means that I think that you are wrong and I am just allowing you to live. Is it not a blasphemy to think that you and I are allowing others to live?"

The final chapter offers a critical analysis of India's future course. There is a discussion of modern India and the difficulties it faces. Examining current events and specific issues our country faces, the author says that political communities based on the exploitation of religious principles are producing imbalances. The core value of Indian culture does not lie in glorifying our culture in a way that stirs up religious conflict. Swamiji's wisdom acts as a guide for Indian society to produce harmony. India has been distinguished from other nations for thousands of years by its own culture. We must keep in mind the voice that was heard in the first half of the 19th century, whose echo has transcended national boundaries, at a time when modern challenges represent a serious threat to India's inclusivity and unity. At a time when superstition and immorality were ravaging the country, it was Swami Vivekananda's voice helped to rejuvenate Indian society.

The book by Sebastian Velassery undoubtedly provides a thorough review of our past impartially and leads us to the principles of Vivekananda. The author does not hold back while stating that Vivekananda was against either a caste revolution or its eradication. He presents every concept with great clarity, eliminating any room for doubt. The author's scholarly insight into India's ancestors contributed to this book's success. This can be recommended as an excellent book to read and discuss in present-day India.