

# 4. Indian Political Thought (Swami Vivekanand)

**For**  
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# His Life and Times

- A great spiritual thinker of modern India, born on 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1863.
- His actual name was Narendranath Datta.
- At Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893, Vivekanand represented Hinduism.
- As a passionate love of Indian Culture, Vivekanand dazzled the western world by his brilliance.
- He wrote on Indian Philosophy and some of his prominent works include : *India and Her problems; Modern India; Our duties to the Masses, The Evils of Adhikarvad and the Cycle of Caste*

# Supreme characteristics

- He was a man of noble character and it can be summed as an agile mix of strength, vigor and endurance.
- His sensitiveness to the evils prevalent in the socio-economic and moral structure of the country did not allow him to take rest and this particular traits of heroism and domineering character earned him the title of “Hindu Napoleon”.

# His View on Hinduism

- He was greatly inspired by *rationalism*. He was much impressed by European science, liberalism and democratic pattern of western society.
- His philosophical foundation is based on 3 influence:
  1. Vedic and vedantic tradition- An apostle of the *Advaita Vedanta*, he belongs to the tradition of the commentators on the Advaita system. He studied the ideas and principles of J. S. Mill, , Kant and Hegel.
  2. His contact and association with Ramkrishna Paramhansa-the mysticism of Ramkrishna allured him a lot and also the simplicity and clarity impacted him in multiple ways.
  3. His own banal experience of life-After the death of Ramkrishna Paramhansa, he travelled a lot like wanderers and experienced the rich aura of tradition and culture from both the east and west.

# Neo Vedanta of Vivekanand(service,sacrifice&freedom)

Three important principles of neo- Vedanta philosophy of Vivekananda are as follows:

1. Vedanta philosophy believed in the oneness between God and man and the solidarity of the universe.
2. It did not stand for a life of renunciation but stood for self-less action in the services of humanity. Hence, service for man should be treated as services of god.
3. It propagated the principle of universal tolerance and believed that different religious faiths were different paths to reach the goal of liberation.

# His views on Humanism

- He opposed the rigidity and the passivity of Vedanta Philosophy.
- He along with Aurobindo was of the opinion that Neo-Vedanta philosophy would increase cultural strength of Hinduism and pave the way for the growth of nationalism in modern India. They interpreted Indian nationalism in the contest of reformation and rejuvenation of Hinduism.
- In his book Raja-yoga, he expresses “Each man is only a conduit for the infinite ocean of knowledge and power that lies behind mankind.”
- His views on humanism can be summarised as a man becomes man in the real sense when he rises above his animal existence and devotes himself to the pursuit of perfection. According to him “Man is man so long as he is struggling to rise above the nature, and the nature is both internal and external’.

# Stages of Human Progress

- He was not a votary of caste system as he believed that the caste system is the antithesis of Hinduism. However its utility to portray a universal system of social stratification evoked his interest. This stratification is similar to the *moral progress of humanism*. This is periodic not a social.
- His vision of human progress postulates a state founded on the rich tapestry of the knowledge of the priest period, the culture of the military, the distributive spirit of the commercial and the ideal equality of the last,.
- The human progress would be incomplete until we eradicate abject poverty and starvation as he said sarcastically that i am a socialist not because i think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread.

# Material Comfort vs. Moral comfort

- He was dead against the materialism and perhaps this had been the sole reason for his non-belief in socialism as he suggested that moral or spiritual progress could be achieved by minimizing our material needs.
- He further said that no nation can be said to have become civilized only because it has succeeded in increasing our material comfort not our moral comfort.



## Salient Features of the Rule of Different Castes as Identified by Vivekanand

<i>Character of the Ruling Class</i>	<i>Merits of their Rule</i>	<i>Demerits of their Rule</i>
<i>Brahmin (the Priests)</i>	It lays the foundation of sciences; it cultivates the mind through which it governs	Tremendous exclusiveness on hereditary grounds; monopoly in the possession of knowledge
<i>Kshatriya (the Soldiers)</i>	Expansion of knowledge; advancement of arts and social culture	tyrannical and cruel rule
<i>Vaishya (the Traders)</i>	Further expansion of knowledge; dissemination of ideas in all directions	It is awful in its silent crushing and blood-sucking power; decadence of culture
<i>Shudra (the Labourers)</i>	Wider distribution of physical comforts; expansion of ordinary education	Lowering of culture; dwindling of extraordinary geniuses

# On Nationalism

- He is regarded as the prophet of nationalism.
- He wanted to see the emergence of a strong and self confident India which would give the message of the Vedanta to the world.
- He strongly believed that the Indians should be proud of their history, tradition, culture and religion and should try their level best to reform them.
- The awakening of the spirit of India was the goal for young people. Hence he advised them to '*arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached*'.

# Major components of nationalism

1. There was unity and oneness of the Indian people despite their outward diversity.
2. It was necessary to remove the evils of caste system in order to inculcate the spirit of social solidarity.
3. There was similarity in the teachings of different religions and India consisted of all religious communities.
4. National spirit in India could be developed by young people by devoting their life to social service and national awakening

# Vivekanand's views on freedom

- A comprehensive analysis of freedom as keynote of spiritual life. He regarded the light of liberty as the only condition of growth. He not only stood for spiritual freedom but also wanted the material or external freedom of man.
- According to him, freedom in its total aspects- physical freedom, mental freedom and spiritual freedom- had been the watchwords of the Upanishads.
- Freedom as natural possession to uplift the moral and conscientious development of humanity.
- his concept of freedom was primarily spiritual.
- Vivekananda plea for the individual freedom and social equality made him a firm believer in the institution of democracy.

# Reference

- Gauba,O.P., Indian Political Thought,Mayur paperbacks, Delhi,2015