

Swami Vivekananda's Concept of Liberation : An Estimate

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Abstract

In this paper I want to explain Swami Vivekananda's view on liberation and I want to discuss the path through which one can attain liberation. In his concept of liberation Swami Vivekananda makes asserts that the complete total self-negation is required in the path of Advaita for the one who seeks to realize the true self. Following the traditional ancient Hindu philosophy Vivekananda points out that it is only when man is able to pass beyond the cycle of births, deaths and rebirths, he is able to attain immortality. "Swami Vivekananda belongs to that branch of Vedānta that hold that no one can be truly free until all of us sacrifice for others. Even desire for personal salvation one has to be given up, and only tireless work for the salvation of others is the true mark of the enlightened person. The Upaniṣadic sages refuse to be satisfied with anything other than *mokṣa*. Mokṣa is the cessation of the cycle of birth and death and all kinds of pain. It is the realization of oneness with Brahman. Of all the traditional systems of Indian philosophy Advaita view of *mokṣa* appears to be the best. As per this view on the attainment of freedom nothing happens to the world, only our view of it changes. The soul only assumes the form of its true nature. Mokṣa is not the abolition of the self, but realization of its true nature- realization of self. It is like the finding of the golden ring which is all the time in our possession. It is an inward realization, not a gift from the above. By following Vedāntin tradition Vivekananda holds that liberation in life is that state of life wherein the last trace of egoism and selfishness have been given up.

Keywords: Vedānta, Māyā, *Mokṣa*, Brahman, *Īśvara*, *Yoga*, *Niṣkāma karma*

Introduction

Narendranath Dutta, better known as Swami Vivekananda, was a major influence in Hinduism's development. According to Swami Tapasyananda, "Swami Vivekananda was a manifold personality—a spiritual giant, who, not content with

his own unfoldment, intensely strove for the good of all." Everything he did and said was aimed at saving India, ending suffering around the world, and, most importantly, revealing his divinity to every person on the planet.¹ He was the most well-known and significant figure in the history of Vedanta and yoga as spiritual systems. In 1893, in conjunction with the World's Fair in Chicago, Vivekananda became the first Hindu Swami to travel to the West, where he presented Hinduism, Yoga, and Vedanta to the world's parliament of religions. While on the surface Swami Vivekananda may have seemed like a guy with an inexplicable attitude of mind and a walking paradox, he was actually the living explanations of the spiritual life.² The urge to rethink Vedānta philosophy and use it as the theoretical foundation of the struggle for constructing a new India was central to Vivekananda's primary philosophical standpoint. The subject of a shared philosophical tradition was one that Vivekananda considered carefully. Vivekananda wanted to make an impact on a global scale.

Vivekananda taught his followers the importance of holiness, selflessness, and *Śraddāh* (faith). As a lifestyle, he advocated for Brahmacharya. Vivekananda believed that everything in the cosmos could be boiled down to a single struggle for freedom. Under the influence of this impulse, the saint prays and the robber steals. We call the practise of doing something that isn't right evil. A excellent presentation can make even the most mundane object seem impressive. The struggle for independence, however, is driven by the same yearning. The saint's awareness of his own servitude weighs heavily on him; he prays to God for deliverance. Everything in nature, sentient and insentient alike, yearns for independence, whether it knows it or not. Vivekananda made the distinction between the freedom sought by a saint and the freedom sought by a robber, arguing that the former leads to the experience of boundless, indescribable ecstasy while the latter only releases the soul from external connections. Until the conclusion of a cycle of creation, Vivekananda argues, there will and must be, and the millennium of total equality will never come. Equality can't be reached till then. But the hope of making it to the Millennium is a strong inspiration. Fighting for more equality is essential, as is acknowledging its importance for innovation. If there were no effort to win independence and return to God, there would be no creation. The tension between these two factors shapes human motivations. These motivations to work will always exist, with some leaning towards servitude and others towards independence.³

According to Advaita philosophy, the ego is the root of all suffering. Our unique identities as individuals are what set us apart from other living things, but they also bring us hostility, jealousy, hardship, and the rest of life's ills. When this notion is finally eradicated, conflict will end and suffering will vanish. We must therefore forego this. We must always be prepared to lay down our lives for the most helpless of creatures. Advaitins believe that a person has achieved perfection when he or she is willing to give up even their own life for a small

insect. When he is finally ready, the curtain of ignorance will part, and he will know who he truly is. He will experience a sense of unity with the cosmos even in this existence. For a while, this incredible universe will fade away, and he will know himself for who and what he is. But as long as he is bound to this body by karma, he must endure. The *Jīvanmukti*, or "living freedom," is what the Vedāntins refer to as the state in which the veil has been lifted yet the body continues to exist for some time.⁴

Mok, also known as liberation from all ties, Vivekananda is the peak of the value science and represents something lovely. Dharma, artha, and kāma can provide us with a fulfilling and joyful existence. A modern welfare state in its entirety. Knowledge of the Atman, of God, hidden within the heart of every human being, which, as will be shown later, is the very source of all values, the very value of all values, is something that Vivekananda believes will always be missing from human life. Even though we are influenced by it during dharma practise, we still don't know much about it. Vivekananda calls our attention back to the circumstance at hand: *satyasyasatyam*, "the truth of all truths," the value of all values, the very source of the universe. A direct search for God, the infinite and immortal, who is the Self of all humans and the universe, begins when this inquiry arises in the human heart.

Dharma, artha, and kāma can provide us with a fulfilling and joyful existence. A modern welfare state in its entirety. Knowledge of the Infinite reality of the *ātman*, or God, hidden within the heart of every human being, which, as will be shown later, is the very source of all values, the very value of all values, is what Vivekananda believes is missing from human life. Even though we are influenced by it during dharma practise, we still don't know much about it. Vivekananda calls for reflection on the situation, reminding us that *Satyasya Satyam* "the truth of all truths" is the very source of the cosmos. A direct search for God, the infinite and immortal, who is the Self of all humans and the universe, begins when this inquiry arises in the human heart. Vivekananda is a firm adherent to karma. The only reason for responsibility is to rein in one's baser instincts and guide one towards morality and faith. It is recommended that the seeker give up everything, including good, in order to move beyond both evil and good and reach enlightenment.⁵

Swami Vivekananda integrates Jain, Karma, Bhakti, and Yoga into his philosophies. According to Swamiji, "a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic, and equally conducive to action" 6 Swamiji said, "All men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work, were equally present in full."⁷

Vivekananda implemented his idea of freedom via his religious philosophy. Swamiji incorporates Jñāna, Karma, Bhakti, and Yoga into a unified religious philosophy. It is important to note that although Swami Vivekananda places great

emphasis on the simultaneous practise of Jna, Karma, Bhakti, and Yoga in his religion, he is willing to acknowledge that following any one of these paths wholeheartedly will ultimately lead to liberation. A great ideal, according to Swami Vivekananda, is love. After one has abandoned all commercial concerns and overcome their fears, they enter the third stage of awakening, where they come to understand that "love is always the highest ideal."⁸

He said that one of Ramakrishna's most valuable lessons was that "Jīva is Śīva" (each individual is divinity itself). This became his personal mantra, and it inspired him to create Daridra Nāryana Sevā, the worship of God by serving those with the fewest resources. Swami Vivekananda once said, "He who wants to serve Jīva must serve His children-must serve all creatures in this world f He who sees Jīva in the poor, in the weak, and in the distressed, really worships Jīva; He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Jīva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Jīva is more pleased than with the man who sees him only in 9 If Brahman is indeed the unity behind all manifestations, then how can we judge ourselves to be better or worse than anyone else? He pondered this question internally. In the end, he came to the conclusion that the oneness a devotee experiences in moka renders all of these differences irrelevant. "He who the jnani refers to as Brahman is the atman to the Yogins and the Bhagavān to the Bhaktas. When he is serving as a priest in the temple and a cook in the home, the same Brahman goes by both titles."¹⁰

Swami Vivekananda is a follower of the school of Vedanta that maintains that true freedom cannot exist for any one person until all people are free. A true sign of enlightenment is unyielding dedication to the salvation of others, which requires giving up even the desire for personal salvation. For one's personal redemption and the welfare of the World, or *Ātmano Mokṣārtham Jagad-hitya ca*, was the guiding idea upon which he built his mission. To be one of Vivekananda's devotees, one must be holy, selfless, and have raddh (faith). He advocated for the use of Brahmacharya techniques. True humility, borne of the realization that we are essentially oblivious, will unlock our hearts to spiritual truths, according to Vivekananda. As long as we have even a trace of aha'k'r, or conceited self-importance, we will never be able to see the truth.¹¹

Swami Vivekananda taught that every soul has the potential to attain immortality. The definition of immortality is the absence of death. Achieving God-given illumination, in Vivekananda's view, is the holy grail of human inquiry. Researching spirituality, religion, and fate consumes more time and effort than any other field of study.¹² When we say that the soul is immortal, we imply that the soul does not perish at the moment of physical death; rather, the soul continues on afterward. Since freedom is fundamental to the soul, being enslaved does not seem right to the spirit. According to the impressions, the human soul has migrated from one form to another throughout its history, but it is only in the highest form of man that it finds true liberation. Man is the pinnacle of creation,

surpassing even the angelic form because of his ability to achieve freedom.¹³ The soul's apparent bondage is really a surface interpretation of the soul. There are two halves to immortality: the ability to stay alive and the ability to live forever. If you have true immortality, death is not the end of your story. Swami Vivekananda blends ideas from the doctrines of ignorance and karma into his own theory of the soul in this way. Renunciation, as stated by Vivekananda, is the fundamental principle. No one, not even Brahma and the World-Gods, may achieve *mukti* until they are initiated into this notion.¹⁴

Concept of liberation or *mukti* or freedom from bondage is the most vital concept of Hinduism. To quote Swami Vivekananda-

"Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent
Release the soul forever. No more is birth,
Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The "I"
Has All become, the all is "I" and Bliss.
Know thou art That, *Sannyāsin* bold!"¹⁵

The idea of freedom is central to Swami Vivekananda's ideology. Only God's grace and a man's commitment to personal holiness will free him from his servitude. The self is our own flawless nature, whereas nature acts as a curtain to conceal the truth. Mantra recitation and meditation are not leading to any noticeable changes in men, as stated by Swami Vivekananda. This is because their mental faculties are not yet developed enough to make use of these disciplines. The human body is the first of these rare things since the human mind is the closest representation of God and because we are God's own image. Second, there must be a strong yearning for independence. The third is the wise teacher who has already waded through the waters of dualism.¹⁶ If you try to find your own salvation, Swami Vivekananda says, "You will go to the hell!" If you want to reach the pinnacle, focus on saving the lives of others around you. Put an end to the yearning for salvation (*mukti*). These practises are the pinnacle of all spiritual training.¹⁷

When a soul joins a body, it risks becoming enslaved to it and experiencing pain. Ignorance plays a role here as well, specifically a failure to understand the true character of human beings. In the eternal condition, one would theoretically be beyond all of these limitations. This would be the ultimate liberation from the confines of the body, as it would mean escaping the process of birth altogether. In Honour of Swami Vivekananda People who are just interested in their own salvation will end up with neither their own nor anyone else's. All suffering stems from a person's inability to empathise and take initiative, so overcoming these traits is essential. The Lord alone knows the full extent of each person's ability, so we should give everyone a fair shot and trust Him with the results. Having unconditional love for everyone is challenging, but it's necessary for reaching *mukti*.¹⁸ In a condition of liberation, all pain and anguish are eliminated forever. This is not a state of ignorance, but rather of enlightenment. In the condition of

immortality, the soul would be liberated from the cycle of reincarnation, relieved of all pain, and fully aware of its inherent independence. In addition to the relief from suffering that emancipation brings, it also brings pleasant feelings of joy and contentment. The world has glued our thoughts to it. We must direct their attention solely towards God. The goal is to redirect one's attention from the world around them to God. Then and only then can one be certain of realizing God and attaining eternal freedom." Ours not to reason why, ours but to do and die," Swami Vivekananda once said. Have faith, and know that the Lord has called us to accomplish great things. Be prepared, that is, maintain your holiness and purity for the sake of love. If you show compassion for those who are less fortunate than yourself, the Lord will reward you.¹⁹

Ways of Liberation

In his philosophies, Swami Vivekananda brings together divergent means of emancipation. Aside from being infinitely existing, knowing, and blissful, Vivekananda ascribes nothing else to God. It is impossible to have either knowledge or love, or to have existence without the other. Vivekananda seeks to unite Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss in perfect balance. For this reason, he places more value on the ideal life and the ideal spiritual path than on knowledge per se, love per se, or job per se. His goal is peace, not unilateral progress. Vivekananda argued that one may combine the wisdom of Buddha with the intelligence of Śaṅkara. Swami Vivekananda proposed the following yoga techniques to help people achieve personal freedom, spiritual enlightenment, and even immortality-

Karma-Yoga

When it comes to karma mārga, everything hinges on how well we do our jobs. Every duty necessitates sacrifice of one's own interests. Karma-Yoga refers to the practise of channelling one's will into constructive action in order to develop one's spirituality. Love motivates the actions of a Karma-Yogin. He has no vested interest in his actions and takes no pleasure in them. Attachment can occur only when there is a positive reinforcement loop in place. Swami Vivekananda took the philosophy of "work for work's sake" from the Buddha, who continued to serve others even after he attained Nirvāna. The teachings of the Gītā on Niṣkāma Karma were highly influential on Swami Vivekananda.²⁰

Niṣkāma Karma describes an individual's deeds that are not driven by the desire to reap the benefits of their efforts. The end effect is secondary to the act of doing good itself. Those who do not believe in the presence of God must sacrifice all of their earned rewards to their own free will, while those who do must sacrifice their rewards to God. This leads to the emergence of detachment. "Attachment is the feeling of belonging to something or someone. Having possessions makes us more self-centered, and being self-centered is a surefire recipe for unhappiness, as the saying goes. Selfishness, servitude, and unhappiness are the results of such

a restricted outlook. The path to self-abnegation is paved by the non-attachment that arises from selflessness. When a man is selfless, he is willing to give up his own needs in order to help others.

According to Swami Vivekananda, "Karma-Yoga is a system of ethics and religion aimed at achieving freedom through nonattachment and good deeds."²¹ The Karma-Yogi is not obligated to adhere to any particular set of beliefs. He might not have any religious or spiritual convictions, and he definitely wouldn't ponder the nature of his soul or anything similar. He's on his own to figure out how to achieve his unique life goal of self-actualization. Because he must solve the same problem that the jnani applies reason and inspiration to and the Bhakta applies love to, every instant of his life must be a realisation."²²

Jñāna-Yoga

Knowledge (Jñāna) Yoga is the way. Knowledge is the only thing that can drive out ignorance. This naivete is what keeps us in servitude. Vivekananda argues that being unable to tell reality from fiction is the root cause of ignorance. Vivekananda felt nothing but compassion for "Jna." He claims that whatever we do is essential for igniting the flame of insight. Jna-Yoga posits that there are two components to knowledge: fire and light. Knowledge purifies our inner consciousness at the same time that the fire purges our mental filth. To get insight into one's own nature, one must forsake all material and spiritual longings. Only through this kind of introspection can ignorance be eliminated. Jna-Yoga's strategy is to make the seeker believe that they are one and the same with themselves. Learning about oneself is not something that can be learned by reading books or attending lectures given by sages. We need quiet time to reflect on the lessons we've been taught. Focus and attention must be exercised regularly. Hearing about the Self, reading about the Self, contemplating the Self, and meditating on the Self lead the mind to the conclusion that the Self is the only reality and everything else is an illusion. According to Jna-Yoga, the key to freedom lies in understanding oneself.

Vivekananda, an Advaitin like Śāṅkarācārya, argues that Brahman is nirguna, or attributeless, but is instead the pure essence of Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss (*Sacchidānandasvarupa*). Vivekananda, on the other hand, proposes a novel idea that is absent from the Advaita Vedanta: that Brahman is the same as Love (Prema), or Bliss (nanda). That's what makes Vivekananda's Advaita Vedanta special.²³ Once again, in his view, *Sat*, *Cit*, and *ānanda* are not three distinct facets of Brahman, but rather, one and the same. It is impossible for the human mind to comprehend or articulate Brahman. For Vivekananda, "even to think is to limit and to lose," such that "any imagination, any concept is in vain," *neti, neti* (not this, not this) is all that can be uttered.²⁴

According to the Vedanta, our freedom is inherent in our very nature. To quote the Bhagavad Gita: "I am the Blissful One; I am the Blissful One; I have no

death, no fear, no caste, no religion, no parents, no siblings, no friends, and no enemies. I am not limited by good or bad, by joy or sorrow. I am not a prisoner of pilgrimages, books, or rituals. I am the Absolute Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss; I have no need for food or water because the body does not belong to me. According to the Vedanta, this is the one and only acceptable form of worship. To convince ourselves and the world that we are godlike, this is the only path."²⁵

Bhakti -Yoga

"Bhakti Yoga" is the spiritual discipline of cultivating an affectionate connection with the Divine. Karma-mrga and Bhakti-mrga do not compete with one another. We can only learn to be selfless by first cultivating love, for only then can helping others become a source of joy. "Bhakti Yoga is a real, genuine search after the Lord, a search beginning, continuing, and ending in love."²⁶ Swami Vivekananda held that love and devotion were universal human characteristics. Because of this, Bhakti mār̄ga is the most accessible method of spiritual development. This mār̄ga does not necessitate any special skills or abilities on your behalf, unlike the other three. Our affections are usually reserved for objects and people of this world that are fleeting, transient, and ultimately unreal. According to the aforementioned definition, love is not a feeling but a commitment. Instead of settling for a love that is limited and confined, we should work to expand it to encompass all of creation. All previous loves pale in comparison to this one. Only God's love is truly unconditional, and everyone can experience it. To put it another way, God is the whole and everything else is a part of God. We must love everything if we adore that total. Therefore, only a person who loves God first can truly love others.²⁷

For those seeking enlightenment through Bhakti mār̄ga, Swami Vivekananda laid up a road map. The concept of just worshipping the Brahman as Absolute via adoration and devotion is too lofty for the typical human being. The Bhakta, the seeker of Bhakti-mār̄ga, will therefore direct his devotion towards a relative aspect of Brahman, such as God. During the first stage, we worship statues and relics of gods and prophets. The second phase centres on worship, namely prayer to God, chanting of hymns, repeated invocations of God's name, and the singing of songs of praise to God. The third tier requires a higher, more ethereal level of prayer to God. Instead of singing hymns, people sit in silence and reflect. At this point in his or her devotion, the believer has come to accept God as the one true being. In the last stage, the devotee and God merge into a one entity, erasing all distinctions between themselves and their objects of devotion. When a devotee reaches this pinnacle, they become virtually one with the Supreme. It's difficult to put into words, but it's a lot like having a direct line to God.

The first step of Bhakti Yoga is known as Gauni bhakti (or Apar bhakti), while the final stage is known as Par bhakti (or Supreme bhakti). Gauni bhakti refers to a form of devotion in which the adherent looks to external mythology or symbolism for meaning. Vara, Mankind's Ultimate Deity, is worshipped in a

wide variety of manifestations, including rituals, mantras, images, God-men, and natural powers like as the Sun, the Air, the Sky, etc. This phase, which purifies the soul and prepares the heart for renunciation, must be accomplished before Par Bhakti may be attained. The unconditional love and devotion of a devotee is what is meant by "Supreme Devotion," also known as "Par Bhakti." When we reach Par Bhakti, we stop worshipping God for our own selfish ends and start worshipping Him because of who He is.²⁸ In Par Bhakti, one's love for God is unwavering regardless of God's response. This is the zenith where one's devotion truly grows. Without self-denial, Para Bhakti cannot be attained. Vaigya, also known as renunciation, is the state of having no desire for anything save God. A person with Par Bhakti goes far beyond the norms of organised religion. This level of devotion is identical to Para Bhakti, the highest form of devotion, and to Jna, the highest form of understanding. The ultimate aim of Par Bhakti is nonduality, or the union of the devotee with the Beloved. The three defining features of Par Bhakti can be viewed as the three corners of a love triangle, as described by Vivekananda. To begin, love isn't something you can bargain for. The true Bhakta worships God without expecting anything in return. Second, love eliminates all anxiety. A person who has fully surrendered to God has nothing left to worry about. Third, when love is developed by training it to love the highest Ideal, there is no rivalry.²⁹

Raja- Yoga

Patanjali's yoga, also known as Rja-Yoga, is a scientific discipline, according to Swami Vivekananda. We can have a direct experience of God and a great spiritual awakening through this yoga.³⁰ Concentration and mindfulness are stressed greatly. Rāja-Yoga is a path to immortality through the control of one's own mind and behaviour.³¹ There are several yoga practises that have a psychophysical component. Rāja-Yoga's third level is meditative, leading to a more personal connection with the divine. This level of concentration, however, is impossible to attain unless the individual in question has complete control over his or her own mind and body. A direct and rigorous method of control must be used to the mind and body. This method of self-control is known as Rāja-Yoga.³²

Rāja-Yoga, in Vivekananda's opinion, is the quickest and most surefire way to enlightenment. This is why Rāja-Yoga is sometimes referred to as "the yoga of kings." He was aware, however, that this strategy was inappropriate for the weak. Both immense confidence and massive willpower are required for Raja-yoga. Vivekananda argues that monism is the sole source of our power.³³

Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prānāyama, Pratyāhara, Dhyāna, and Samādhi are the eight limbs of Rāja Yoga. There are five practises that help you on your yoga journey from the outside in (*bahirangasādhanā*), and three practises that help you on your yoga journey from the inside out (*antarangasādhanā*).³⁴

Conclusion

By redefining liberation as the expression of the divinity already latent in man, Vivekananda removed a touch of escapism from the conventional concept of Mukti, or escape from the cycle of births and deaths. He set the bar for obedient seekers at the pursuit of perfection rather than the avoidance of trouble. Vivekananda considered all four types of yoga—Bhakti, Karma, Raja, and Jñāna—to be of equal value. He believed that any of these practises might stand alone or in tandem with others, but that Karma, or selfless work, should be prioritised in every person's plan of spiritual discipline. Vivekananda uses Vedānta philosophy to promote renunciation and service as India's national goals. The primary teaching of the Jīva is that he is to be served as though he were Jīva. Vivekananda's reinterpretations of Vedānta have altered the tradition's perspective. If a theory can never be put into practise, it is no more than mental acrobatics. As a religion, Vedānta must be highly applicable. It doesn't try to sell an unattainable utopia. This notion can be summed up in a single phrase: "You are Divine." According to Vivekananda, Vedānta maintains that its realization is possible for anybody. Nothing—not the existence of men, women, or children, not even the existence of people of different races or sexes—can prevent the ideal from being realized. Vedānta demonstrates that it has already come to fruition and is present.

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