

Spiritual Wave of Neo-Vedanta and Global Peace

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Neo-Vedanta is the classical Vedanta modified for the modern times. Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother from behind the scene and, more appropriately Swami Vivekananda from the centre stage, played the key roles in bringing Neo-Vedanta to the doorsteps of people since the last decade of the 19th century. Swamiji preached Neo-Vedanta for the first time at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893.

Neo-Vedanta deals explicitly with religion that takes care of peace at the individual level as well as at the collective level. So, essentially it speaks about the harmony of all religions and global peace.

Right after Swamiji's Chicago Address, a spiritual wave has been generated and is being propagated continuously with everincreasing intensity, which is felt and experienced throughout the globe and this wave unequivocally states that all human beings, nay the entire creation as such, are the manifestations of the One and only One Supreme Intelligence. This Neo-Vedantic spiritual tide, I believe, will sooner or later act as the fulcrum of global peace.

This wave was set in motion by Sri Ramakrishna who had a spiritual mission to the world. He had noticed the waning of spirituality in the world and understood that the vast repository of his spiritual experiences and power would act as the dynamic source of global peace and avert a

further decline of religion. Sri Ramakrishna was Divinity personified and he was born for the holistic good of humanity by shedding new light in the realm of religion and spirituality. He came to help others attain liberation and to stop religious conflicts and degradation of humanity by preaching the eternal Truth—'As many Faiths, so many Paths'. This spirit was broadcast to the world magnificently by his worthy disciple, Swami Vivekananda. The Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, from behind the scene, acted as the lifeline of this Neo-Vedantic spiritual wave and thus this Movement started. The torch is now being carried by the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission. Sri Sarada Math of Dakshineswar has also been playing the same role since 1954.

Neo-Vedanta is categorically telling us that the same Truth is being expressed by dualism, qualified non-dualism and non-dualism. In no way they are contradictory; these three are different stages of the same Truth and any quarrel in this regard is simply uncalled for. The world is now witnessing the manifestation of this overwhelming spiritual power and the true believers in the ultimate good are experiencing religion as an object of immediate knowledge. Even science is now knocking at the door of the abiding principle of Oneness and the Ultimate Truth. This growing sense of Oneness is the panacea for

global peace. Unity in diversity is the buzzword here.

Neo-Vedanta is now showing the world this transcendental idea of Oneness amidst apparent diversity and emphasizes that this idea has to be practised in our everyday life irrespective of our nationality and religion. This catholicity is very often visible in an individual who believes in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement.

Neo-Vedanta is not limited to any particular society, community, country, nation, sect or religion; it does not have any ethnicity barrier. The idea is unique as it breaks all narrow barriers and finds a cord of unity. It supports yoga, karma, devotion and knowledge. However, Swami Vivekananda had a distinct vision that the present-day society of all nations will embrace *Karma Yoga* as the path because it is suited to this age. The society has been heading in this direction since Swamiji's time and this proves the correctness of his vision and understanding. However, there must not be any misgivings about Sri Ramakrishna's teachings and the path shown by Swamiji. There is no deviation and chink in the current path being followed by the believers of Neo-Vedanta as propounded by Swamiji. The principal finding of Neo-Vedanta centres on the realization that the Divine is seen and manifested everywhere. This is the crux of the whole of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji's Neo-Vedanta Movement. It is this spirit of universal love for all and Oneness that can usher in global peace. Neo-Vedanta avers that individual minds are just integral parts of One and only One Cosmic Mind, ie the Supreme Intelligence.

A spiritual awakening is required to understand this concept of Oneness. Neo-Vedanta awakens this spirituality. This

spiritual knowledge makes a fusion of Western thoughts with those of the Orient. Swamiji's teachings thus reveal to us the essence of religion that is universally appealing. In fact, this Vedantic religion ingresses into the sanctum sanctorum of Divinity by transcending infinite array of ideas.

Since irreligion was caused by the venom of excessive materialism and affluence in the West, the scientific non-dual Vedanta seemed to attract the Westerners, especially the anti-church intelligentsia, who started following the stream cascading down the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. Conversely, in the East, it was of utmost necessity to weed out abject poverty and hunger and increase the literacy rate of the millions. This fusion of two diverse necessities in two parts of the world is Swamiji's Neo-Vedanta. Vedanta usually teaches mental renunciation, non-attachment, dispassion and universal divine love. Neo-Vedanta of Swamiji works quietly and plants high-powered seeds in the psyche which sprout afterwards to transform the society. The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta legacy is a phenomenon per se in the present-day world that does not try to make superficial and cosmetic reforms; rather it reforms the inner core of the humanity at large.

Neo-Vedanta says that 'religion is realization', no verbose talking, no empty articulation of words, no doctrines or theories. It stresses that '*religion is being and becoming*', not merely hearing lectures and discourses in a nicely organized seminar, workshop or conference; *changing oneself into what one believes is what is required*. This Vedanta inspires one to serve others as a means of spiritual practice and eases one's path of realizing the presence of

the Supreme Intelligence in all creatures; in other words it helps us to have the vision of Oneness in everything and everyone. It teaches us to transform work into worship by looking upon all beings as manifestations of the Divine.

Neo-Vedanta is now dealing with human problems of global dimension. The world has verily become a global village now, thanks to the enormous advances in communication, transportation as well as migration of people from one end of the globe to the other. Local problems now affect the whole world. Thus the possibility of worldwide conflicts becomes more and more acute with inevitable ominous effects. The Neo-Vedantic thoughts are useful to curb these threats by inculcating in all the spirit of Oneness. This in turn is supposed to make living more and more peaceful and facilitate a sustainable development throughout the world.

Results

The Neo-Vedantic Movement has already, directly or indirectly, made all religions more and more tolerant and liberal, much to the chagrin of the fundamentalists. A sense of Oneness is on the rise all over the world due to this Neo-Vedantic Movement. This has also resulted in the upsurge of a spiritual wave making individuals more and more inclined towards spiritual faith and belief, again much to the discomfort of the atheists and agnostics. Neo-Vedanta disapproves of racism, ethnic prejudices, casteism as well as undue exploitation of the environment, flora and fauna.

The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement is the confluence of the Oriental and Occidental, the past and the future, tradition and modernity, and religion and science. Ramakrishna and Vivekananda—

these two angelic personalities are the architects of the spiritual roadway connecting the East and the West. There is hardly any dimension of human development which escapes their all-piercing insight and vision. They have offered the humanity the constructive ideas for creating a peaceful world. Their dynamic message of humanism is based on the Vedantic vision of the innate divinity of all beings. It is necessary in modern times for all policyframers to imbibe this profound message for forging a fruitful and happy human relationship among people under their control and governance. Several nations have now got political freedom. But this freedom is yet to energize the vast masses of submerged and marginalized people and enable them to take a dignified place in the mainstream of national and international life.

The Vedanta philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda fills us, the lesser mortals, with courage to rededicate ourselves to the service of human beings everywhere. The contemporary world is ridden by a host of crisis like insufficient agricultural productivity, high maternal and infant mortality rates, low status of women in general, gross violation of human rights, spiralling corruption and scam, spectre of hunger stalking people across several continents and starvation deaths, and the neglect of the underprivileged masses, to name a few. This situation has now reached to an alarming state because of disparity and maldistribution of goods and services.

The highly educated policymakers and administrators are often failing to uplift millions of suffering people. Mass education is required to redress this unhealthy and sordid situation. Selfish tendencies generated by the present-day education are the principal reasons for this deplorable situation. People

of heart, and not the ruthless intellectuals, are required. People of heart can only feel for the underprivileged people. Modern-day education is spelling dangerous consequences everywhere resulting in widening political, economic, social and cultural divides. Vedanta proclaims the divine nature of every individual and this must be ingrained into the education system of the world. This education will make the youths strong, fearless and of good character. Sri Ramakrishna-Swami Vivekananda antidote to this problem is that the youth should have confidence in themselves, have courage and strength to act and adhere to truth. All these are based upon the idea of the divinity of all individuals. Only life-building and character-making assimilation of Neo-Vedantic ideas can help the individuals to become responsible citizens. It should not be forgotten that due to *the absence of character based on our inherent divinity that one person exploits the other*. Not only the oppressed but also the oppressor, the exploited as well as the exploiter, become bereft of human dignity. Political freedom of several nations is yet to awaken people and transform them into dignified beings worthy of the legacy of the divinity inherent in the man.

The societies, irrespective of political systems, are often plagued by the bane of privileges conferred by wealth, caste, religion and education. Vedanta does not sanction this privilege to anyone on any basis whatsoever. *Vedanta breaks down the idea of privilege* by enlightening us about the divine which is equally present in us all. This awakening is a firm bulwark against all repressive measures which always disturb the functioning of a peaceful society. Light of Vedanta is essential for the poor and the ignorant, but more so for the rich and the

educated. Education must create a new class of people with empathy rather than intellectual abilities alone so that the world can experience peace and sustainable human development.

The world, even though with many deficiencies, has now been squeezed into a village from economic, political, social and cultural points of view. This is good in a way. But this cannot be sustained for peaceful living of the human race as a whole without having spiritual enlightenment. The inherent harmony among different nationals and religions has to be understood and promoted. The indelible mark left behind by Swami Vivekananda has to be carried forward for our sustainable development. International peace and unity among nations are possible only through cooperation. A new world order is perhaps on the anvil which will eliminate aggression, coercion and conflict among nations. Thus the bigger and more powerful nations will be forced to come out of hegemony and cooperate with smaller nations striving for socio-economic survival; and this is possible only through a Vedantic call from the Upanishads propounded by Swamiji. The solidarity of the universe is to be ensured and this is possible only through love and not hatred, for only the spirit of Oneness pervades the entire universe. This is the bridge of fixing the chinks or the yawning gaps and chasms between people, viewpoints and feelings. No amount of force, bulldozing, governmental and legislative bestiality, but the ethical and spiritual culture through constructive action instead is the panacea for collective welfare and uplift of the human race.

Human development means going to the roots of things and the problems baffling the entire humanity. For this *We must rise from*

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