

A Discourse of Swami Vivekananda on Salvation from Mystic Death

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Abstract

Swami Vivekananda had very precise opinion on death and posthumous deeds. In his lifetime he had given lecture once on death which was published in form of an essay in The New York Morning Advertiser. He explained there about immortality of Atman; the soul, reincarnation, death and life after death. He had successfully tried to elucidate unnecessary fear on death, about devotion in selfless love, truth, salvation of bravery and simple difference between life and death. Due to absolute ignorance, mystic death, the ultimate truth of life remains fearsome to almost everyone. At present time, according to aftermath of globalization our so called Modern (Postmodern? -> Post postmodern??) Societies have been infected in consumerism and people are going to be more and more formal in relationship, self-centered, materialistic in sense and equally very scared of death. On the eve of 150th birth anniversary of great spiritual philosopher Swami Vivekananda, his philosophy on mystic death can enlighten and incite us for selfless love.

The state of being dead means the state of being not yet in existence. The sentence carries such an inner meaning which enlightens us about philosophy of life. Life and death coexist. These two consecutive states are continuously dynamic in creation, reformation of this entire world. But we always remain very scared of death, the ultimate mystery of everyone's life. Swami Vivekananda once said –

“Man is thoroughly persuaded that he cannot die.”

Although he had written a brief essay on immortality of soul or atman for The New York Morning Advertiser and probably that was the only interview where Swami Vivekananda elucidated death and the state after death. Often called ‘Poet of enslaved humanity’ Pablo Neruda imagined death as darkness, he briefly expressed his feelings regarding death in Sonata ‘There's no forgetting’. Thinkers keep on happening and Pablo's words are –

“I must talk of the rubble that darkens the stones; of the river's duration, destroying itself;/.../ why should day follow day? / Why must the blackness of nighttime collect in our mouths? Why the dead?”

Blackness of nighttime depicts the death, the destiny itself. The gap between life and death can never be controlled by destiny if man has strong self-belief. Almost all relations exist on belief and disbelief in this world, even if believe on God also. Believe on destiny could be fatal and in most of the cases remains unfruitful, on the other side belief on self opens up the way to God. In that situation death comes to us as a positive aspect of life. It's true that nobody wants to die without enjoying this beautiful courtyard of Eden i.e. the world and its creatures. But life and death surely contain some profound inner meaning and that is why these make difference from individual perspective. First of all the definition of death should be clear. The person who cannot feel his pulses of inner soul, his likings, cannot fix up his goal of life, cannot stretch his both hands with widened mind for others, cannot develop own self for the people, can be treated as dead because in this case the first and foremost indication will be that the person does not love own self. The messages of Swami Vivekananda have shown us the way to think positive and thus dependence on self reliance can be explored. At this state only human being can venture that mystery of death because he knows the meaning of true love, also the ultimate aesthetic truth of life.

Before elaborate discussion on these essences of life, it will be facilitating for us to concentrate on the philosophy of Vivekananda regarding death. As early mentioned the persuasion of man is that he cannot die. Usually this sort of thought of a common man intends to secure his body. He does not want to understand the mortality of body. Vivekananda had said that body and mind are ever changing and so these are mortal. Intrinsic behavior intensifies man to make belief on these ever changing aspects as unchanged.

This kind of basic mistake appears to be a beginning of mystic death. This kind of intrinsic behavior also triggers many weaknesses of mind and body. More explicitly illness signifies inner weakness and selfishness is also one of them. Man becomes selfish because of attraction in non-eternal things so as his own body. Swami Vivekananda's simple law would be very useful for quoting –

“Unselfishness is more paying. Only the people have not the patience to practice it...love, truth, and unselfishness are not merely moral figures of speech, but they form our highest ideal, because in them lies such as manifestation of power.”

It is equally appropriate in case of selfish behavior. Practically in most cases man does not have right thought about mind, body and soul. So regarding manifestation of power or form of highest ideal a complete ignorance exists in mind of most of the people throughout their entire life. At this state of mental blockade spiritual genius Swami Vivekananda had shown the way of wonder. According to his explanation state of mind and body are ever changing. Both cases are not at all static and these variable factors can never allow man to transcend himself. Any deformity of soul or change of its state is not possible. It exists above all metaphysical covering of mental periphery. Open mind can unleash man to feel its existence and help to make bonding with omnipotent God or with any dynamic energy which gives in mind a positive feeling and unlimited ecstasy. Fearless mind which enterprises strength depicts life. Sense on animate and inanimate features of this world gradually grows and it alleviates man for mental sublimation. Swami Vivekananda once said –

“Strength is Life, Weakness is Death. Expansion is Life, Contraction is Death. Love is Life, Hatred is Death.”

Swamiji had also said that the time when any external energy cannot make any influence on inner soul, cannot make any change or distortion, you will feel free from all mortal bonding. Before that one should be focused towards his goal. He should think that he is not bounded otherwise he will make his own bondage. This is knowledge of freedom which is the ultimate goal of all nature. Mental weakness is the cause of death. To strengthen ability of body and mind Vivekananda advised for nutritious food, and then only the mind will be strong. There is a simple correlation between fear and death. In Upanishads, word “fearlessness” comes out bursting like a bombshell upon the masses of ignorance. Atman cannot be realized if ignorance and fear persist. In one sentence fear is death, fear is sin, fear is hell, fear is unrighteousness, and fear is wrong life. All negative thoughts and ideas that are in this world have been generated from this evil spirit of fear. In this context the words of the Viswa Kavi (World – poet) Rabindranath Tagore can be remembered -

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; .../ where words come out from depth of truth... /into that heaven of freedom let my country awake”

In literature and also in spiritual arena, in both cases, the same kind of realization surprises us. Swamiji had emphasized on freeness. It has coherent relation with death. According to his idea man should have realization that he must be free, and at any place, any situation and any circumstances he is alone and free from all anxiety. He is the person who desires to realize Atman and his veneration for his soul should be boundless. This situation can be explained from another angle. There are hundreds of, thousands of microbes surrounding us, but they cannot harm us unless we become weak, until the body is ready and predisposed to receive them. There may be a million microbes of misery floating about us. They dare not approach us; they have no power to get a hold on us, until the mind is weakened. Weakened willpower as constant strain and misery belongs to death.

German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer had written about reincarnation of soul in his book “Die Welt als Wille Und Vorstellung”. In this book his interpretation regarding death invokes us to think and understand the subject from another array. He said that slumbering can be compared with death, more distinctly the death of willpower. Willpower creates dreams of life and man is driven by that willpower until and unless it dies or changes its direction. Vivekananda's quote –

“Nature, body, mind go to death, not we. We neither go nor come. The man Vivekananda is in nature, is born and dies; but the Self we see as Vivekananda is never born and never dies. It is the eternal and unchangeable Reality.”

This simple reality of life comes to us as an absolute truth. Swamiji had tried to mention that our soul is immortal and it can be called by many names but that is not the everlasting identity. Soul can change its name, its place, its choice, its feelings anything and everything like putting on and off dresses and from this concept the theory of transmigration or the theory of reincarnation etymons. In this case death is nothing but a system for materializing of reincarnation.

In the year 1895 the statement of Vivekananda was published from New York in “Metaphysical Magazine”. It’s his assertion that we can discuss a lot about death throughout life but at the end the problem of birth and death cannot be proved as positive or negative aspect by any means. We can debate, teach and broadcast in support of mortality or immortality of human being; we can claim that we have solved this problem by innovating various names but that will be merely self seeking pretension to get peace for a while. We can be superstitious defending our wrong notion about death but the truth can never be distorted. To understand this simple truth Vivekananda urged his disciples to repudiate self.

The 5th-century BC Greek historian Herodotus provided information about ancient Greece, North Africa, and the Middle East. Herodotus travelled extensively throughout the Mediterranean world, observing the different peoples he encountered and studying the military history of the region. Regarding death once Herodotus said –

“Death is a delightful hiding-place for weary men”.

According to Herodotus it seems that weary men want to get refreshed in a delightful hiding place and want to change their dresses so as body. But he had a wrong concept that Egyptians were aware of immortality of soul. Afterward two modern eminent Egyptologists Maspero and A. Erman had concluded that Egyptians did not have knowledge of immortality of soul. Amongst Aryans especially Hindus had the knowledge that soul is completely different entity and it can dwell in body individually. Swami Vivekananda had said something more about this individual entity. He said that we have to learn, to feel ourselves in other bodies, to know that we are alone. We have to throw off all other nonsense, superstitions to the winds. We should not have any weakness even in the face of death. We should not repent, brood over past life. Momentarily if we concentrate our life on limited things, the faster we go towards death. Living this little life is simply death and that is why the fear of death comes. To get over from this fear of death the key-message of Swami Vivekananda to the entire world is selfless love. It was his fervent belief that love will make every word tell like a thunderbolt. Wealth, fame, enjoyments of life is only for a few days. It will be far better to die on the field of duty, preaching the truth than to die like a worldly warm. Self less love can make every impossible thing possible. It has enormous power to conquer the whole world without bloodshed. It can sweep away the difference between life and death. It can limit to unwanted inquisitiveness on posthumous deeds. There is no question about it that the wonder monk Swami Vivekananda had given us awakening call showing us the silk route of selfless love which makes explicable conclusion that life and death are only different expressions of the same thing looked at from different standpoints; they are the falling and the rising of the same wave, and the two form one whole. William Arthur Dunkerley Once said –

“Art thou lonely O my brother? / Share thy little with another / Stretch a hand to one unfriended / And the loneliness is ended....”

On that note it can be asserted that man can only feel this wave of life and death, can overcome fear of death and loneliness if he gives selfless love to all from core of his impeccable heart.

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