PREFACE

The area of research that I have ventured upon is an humble attempt to write on Vivekananda realizing the need of a philosophical interpretation of his teachings which are great reservoir of Truth. This work is an endeavour to prove that the hidden treasures lying in the religious philosophy of Vivekananda are extremely needed to this age of spiritual crisis for his universal attitude to Truth.

Notwithstanding the great achievements of Science and Technology, we are restless and live in a world of strain, anxiety and lots of disillusionment. At no other period of human history as we witness today that many people are suffering from an agonizing persecution and an anguish of heart. Many thinkers shudder to watch in the present society an erosion of values, a dissipation of human purpose and deterioration of personal, social and political morality. Ideals which were taken to be inseparable from social decency and justice and thus guided and disciplined our conduct for centuries seem to be dissociated from the modern man. Presently humanity stands at the crossroads facing two alternatives-war and peace. As a result, there will be either total extinction of man, or there will be a new civilization where all men would live together happily and peacefully without taking resort to force.

In such a situation, the whole world is eagerly waiting for a remedy for reconstructing civilization on love and charity, truth and compassion. The need for revival of religion is realized here as religion is nothing more than man’s
awareness of his essential divinity inherent in him and it is a way through which man can enhance his spiritual qualities as distinctively human.

Such type of modern conception regarding religion is different from traditional approach where the essence of religion lies in its dogmas, creeds and rituals. If religion is realized in its true sense which awakens in a man his sense of dignity which encourages him to the Great, the Noble, the Good and to transcend his lower finite self (to be united with the supreme which will be essentially universal) and Vivekananda is a messenger of this great truth.

The central theme of his inspiring speeches for the whole world was man-his growth, development and fulfilment. He realized well that religious intolerance is at the root of all social, political, cultural, ethnic unrest and disorders. And the day is not far when the entire human race will have to face dangerous atmosphere provided their minds and hearts are not replaced with the spirit of religious tolerance. Here, lies the very relevance of the teachings of Vivekananda, to save the present day world from all kinds of social and political quarrels. Hence, the very aim of this research work is to instil that spirit of religious tolerance advocated by Vivekananda in the minds of the people so that they may be able to cultivate that spirit of tolerance for promoting better understanding and mutual respect for one another belonging to various religious faiths existing in the world. The teachings of Vivekananda is all the more important for peaceful co-existence which we deem to be the crying requirement of the time to come. Thus, we can experience the very spirit of universal religion prevailing in his religious philosophy. While reflecting on the religious
approaches of Vivekananda, I have divided the present work into six chapters. The chapter scheme are as follows – In the introductory chapter, I have described the brief life-sketch of Vivekananda, his concept of religion and a few lines about his tendencies of universalism in religion including a very broad-minded mentality about religious-philosophical attitude in respect of the world religions.

Chapter II provides with the definition of religion in general and Hinduism in particular with its different notions and doctrines, the significance of the concept of humanism in the context of religion. Vivekananda viewed religion from the Vedantic point of view. Here, it has been attempted that the Vedanta, according to Vivekananda, is the essence of each and every religion in the world. An analysis has been done here to show the very necessity of the Vedanta philosophy in human life.

Chapter III provides a comparative discussion about the philosophies both of Vivekananda and Sankaracharya. The question – Is Vivekananda really influenced by Sankara? has also been discussed from a critical standpoint together with the reference of the other philosophical trends. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to throw light on Vivekananda’s assertion that religion is man’s very constitution. Religion makes direct spiritual discovery of facts of experiences and is not a mere speculative thinking.

The fourth chapter is concerned with Vivekananda’s concept of universal religion. In it, I have tried to show the necessity of religion in modern world. In the midst of every material progress man is in constant crisis. It is only universal
religion with its influence of spirituality on every sphere that can make life more meaningful. The religious intolerance amongst the people of the world can be stopped with the introduction of the universalism in the very concept of religion.

The fifth chapter provides a comparative study from the religious standpoint of Vivekananda with other seven contemporary Indian philosophers. A comparison of Vivekananda’s religious views with the religious approaches put forward by other great contemporary Indian philosophers has critically been made where the very dominance of spiritualism is highlighted.

The sixth chapter is the conclusion where a thorough analysis of the entire issue is made before coming to the final judgment on the findings. Study shows that Vivekananda preached no new religion. He was undoubtedly a great scholar of religion and penetrated into the major existing religions. To him, religion is not mere collection of doctrines and rituals but realization of God in the soul. He advocated a religion acceptable equally to all minds. Vivekananda always adhered to the Vedantic conclusion of divinity of each and every man and oneness pervading through all the creatures. He analyzed the ups and downs of material civilization and spiritually revolutionized the religion of the East and the West with the logic of Vedanta. He declared that realization of the latent divineness is our religion. If man can rediscover his real nature, he will, then, be capable of understanding his non-difference from the other human beings. This new standpoint opens out a fresh horizon of interhuman and intergroup relationship.

It is noteworthy that the concept of universal religion is still a hypothesis. Yet Vivekananda’s approach is very much significant. His suggestion for a
universal form of worship is praiseworthy. This is the Vedantic truth, as God
dwells in every human being as inner most self, He can directly be worshipped
by way of serving mankind. Findings of the research work uphold that if we can
actualize his approach of religion, then this world will become a place for peace
and prosperity under the banner of Vedantic humanity of oneness.

Now, I would like to turn to putting on record my heart felt gratitude
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