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Liberation as the emancipation of the human being, by the human being, and for the human being: an observation

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Abstract

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Swami Vivekananda have formulated a new and alternative philosophical theory towards the society where Liberation is involved in educating the uneducated people, liberation is involved in protesting against injustice, liberation is involved in extending the human value and also in promoting a value based educational system to educate the uneducated human being. They devoted their entire life for the betterment of mankind. They have not served their duties to liberate themselves but to liberate those who are socially deprived, who are known as backward classes in the society and who are totally untouched from light of education. In this research article I would like to highlight liberation in accordance with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Swami Vivekananda's philosophical ideology.

Liberation may be spiritual, ethical and also be social. The orthodox schools of philosophy describe liberation as spiritual, the unorthodox Buddhist school of philosophy and the Jaina school of philosophy explain liberation from the ethical point of view. Apart from these two philosophical explanations regarding liberation we can find liberation from the social point of view, where liberation is not treated as the highest goal or *parama purusartha* of human life. Social liberation denotes social reform or social transformation. But the question is who advocates the social liberation? Those who advocate social liberation they never try to liberate themselves; they only try to liberate the society by reforming or transforming it. I think Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda, B.R. Ambedkar, Mother Teresa and many other rationalist may be called as the advocate of social liberation. They have not served their duties to liberate themselves but to liberate those who are socially deprived, who are known as backward classes in the society and who are totally untouched from light of education irrespective of their caste, class, religion and gender. In this short discourse I want to highlight social liberation in accordance with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Swami Vivekananda's philosophical ideology. They never claimed themselves as philosopher, but it is fact that, what they have done for the society it has created a new philosophical ideology. They have formulated a new and alternative philosophical theory towards the

society that is to be observed in a specific manner. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was an influential socio-religious reformer and he promoted a rational, ethical, and socially-reformed Hinduism. He was also a socio-educational reformer. He is known as the father of the Bengal Renaissance. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar was an active academician, educator, writer, successful teacher and an open minded social reformer. To him educational reform was much important than any other reform. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar also known as the father of modern Bengali language. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar protested against some Hindu rituals and superstitions which are very badly affected the society. They raised their voice to protect the women rights, and preached for women education. They wanted reform the society through educational reform. At that time *sati pratha* or the practice of burning widows, polygamy, child marriage were the main burning problems of the society. To protest that ill treatment of the society they never hesitated and dared to defy the age old Hindu traditions. Raja Ram Mohan Roy fought against the *sati pratha* or the practice of burning widows and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar fought against the polygamy, child marriage and introduced widow remarriage. Swami Vivekananda believes in religion which is based on service for the man kind (*Jib-seva*) that is why his religion is known as the religion of service. In Swamiji's opinion in order to do any activity religion has to be behind it, because religion is the base of the society. It can also be said that what Swami Vivekananda has done throughout his life, it was all for the emancipation for the mankind. He has tried to reconstruct the society on the basis of humanity and fraternity.

Raja Rammohan Roy: Raja Rammohan Roy a great historical figure founded the *Atmiya Sabha* and *Brahma Samaj*. The Brahma Samaj played a major role in reforming the Indian society and it is known as one of the first Indian socio-religious reform movements. Rammohan Roy was a great scholar and an independent thinker who fought for the rights of women. He has undertaken a lot of social reforms to change the socio-cultural structure of Indian society, and played a great role to uplift the status of women in India. He is known as the 'Maker of Modern India' for his greatest efforts in the fields of socio-political matters, education, and public administration and also in religion. He put remarkable efforts to protect the women from religious superstitions. Raja Ram Mohan Roy is remembered as an ethical guide rather than a social reformer for his efforts to establish the abolishment of the practice of *sati* or *sati pratha*. *Sati pratha* was practiced in some places of Bengal as a Hindu funeral practice in which the widow was compelled to sacrifice herself in her husband's funeral pyre. Raja Rammohan Roy is considered as one of the most pioneer figures in the Bengali renaissance for his diverse contributions to the society. Rammohan Roy's impact on modern Indian history was a revival of the pure and ethical principles of the Vedanta school of philosophy as found in the Upanishads.

Here I want to highlight Rammohan's Ideology regarding liberation. He has realized that Indian culture and the Indian heritage are so far rich than the other western countries. In his feelings Indian culture and the traditional Indian religion are too much comprehensive and constructive. He felt that some religious superstitions are making barrier to properly explore the genuine nature of the both Indian culture and traditional Indian religion. That is why at

first he wanted to reform the social structure to awaken the citizen about religious superstitions. He has tried to show the original characteristics of religion to them. But they wrongly interpreted him and never heard his views. At the time of campaigning for the abolishment of *sati pratha* some of the religious leaders threatened him. *sati pratha* is a dangerous practice by which an widow sacrificed herself in her her husband's funeral pyre . Rammohan wanted to know why the religious leaders are in favour of this type of ritual. They replied that if an widow sacrifices herself in her husband's funeral pyre she will be emancipated or liberated forever and if she denied to do so she will never be emancipated or liberated. Rammohan argued a lot against this type religious superstition. But it was going on. Then he has taken the challenge to ban this type of dangerous ritual. He sought to promote a rational society and wanted to prove that, *sati pratha* is nothing but a dangerous and blind religious superstition. It is not a healthy practice so it should be stopped or banned. Burning someone cannot be a means to get liberation. He campaigned a lot to protect the widow from this type of dangerous ritual. He wrote a letter to the then east india comp. Govt. to take steps against *sati pratha*, the practice of burning widows, and requested to ban this type of dangerous ritual to establish a healthy and educated society. And after a long journey it was banned. Though he does not believe in spiritual liberation but considers that liberation only can be gained by proper education which is based on some ethical sense.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar: Ishwar Chandra Bandopadhyay, who is known as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was a philosopher, academician, educator, writer, successful teacher and an open minded social reformer. He received the title "*Vidyasagar*", in Sanskrit *vidya* means knowledge and *sagar* means ocean, i.e., Ocean of Knowledge. His quest for knowledge was so intense that he used to study under a street light as it was not possible for him to afford a lamp at home. For his kind-hearted nature he was also called "*Daya-r-Sagar*" (Ocean of kindness). He was born on 26 September 1820.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar strongly protested against polygamy, child-marriage. His efforts will be remembered in all the time for his great contribution in widow remarriage. He took the initiative in favor of widow remarriage and his initiative was rewarded when Hindu Widow Remarriage Act was passed in 1856. He worked endlessly to transform the society and contributed a lot for women's education in Bengal as well as in India. It can be said that Vidyasagar's contribution towards education, basically for women's education in Bengal was remarkable. His main goal was to spread the utility of education to the grass root level of the society especially for the women. Vidyasagar believes that irrespective of caste, class or gender, everyone have the right to be educated. His aim was to extend the benefits of education to the common people. He wanted to change the status of women by educating them. He had always worked by his personal feelings towards one goal and believed that the social reform is possible only through educational reform. It is true that Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar brought reforms in the education system by removing the pervading darkness.

Vidyasagar strongly protested against the system of polygamy which was also badly affected the women of the society. In the *kulin* Brahmin family it was allowed to the elderly men to marry teenage girls, sometimes it was happened on their deathbeds also. After such type of marriages, these girls would usually be left behind in their parental homes. In their parental homes they had to follow the orthodox rituals and had to face some cruel restrictions which made strict barriers on their freedom to leave. Especially the widows were considered as domestic labour and they had to led a deplorable life. Vidyasagar thought it as unfair and sought to change the system.

Being an open minded personality, Vidyasagar opened up an educational system for the development of lower caste people as well as for the women who were totally untouched from the light of education. At that time most educated women were taught by their liberal fathers or husbands at their own home. People were not ready to send their daughters to the school as the schools are known as public place. And many people were thought that by sending their daughters to school their daughters would not be available for domestic duties. Lack of education women had to face so many hazards like early marriage, domestic violence etc. As Vidyasagar's early life was spent in the village, he was aware about the sorrows and sufferings of women. He believes that sorrows and sufferings of the women can be overcome only by educating the women. To save the women from these suffering he started to educate them. In the early 19th century Vidyasagar established many schools for girls by spending his own hard earned money. In this way he always helped them. In 1849 he established 'Hindu Female School', which is now known as Bethun School.

Like Raja Rammohon Roy Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar has thought about the social emancipation by reforming the society. Rammohon Roy stopped the *Sati protha*, and Vidyasagar started the widow remarriage system in society. Both are to emancipate or liberate the women from the evils of the patriarchal society. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar worked tirelessly for social emancipation. As a social reformer Vidyasagar is remembered for his contribution towards the removal of social injustice like polygamy, child-marriage, and he has always preached for the upliftment of women. By introducing the practice of widow remarriages Vidyasagar mainly tried to protect the widows from the ill practice of the society. It was a progressive attitude towards the society which had never been done earlier.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar constantly worked for the betterment of society, through which he constantly inspired people. He worked tirelessly for social emancipation as well as for educational emancipation. He took up educational reforms as educational movement to protect the uneducated people particularly the women. He was a dynamic person. He had a keen respect towards Indian heritage and Indian traditional religion, and has tried to highlight the Indian heritage and Indian traditional religion in the light of humanism and rationalism as he was deeply influenced by the ideal of humanism and rationalism.

Swami Vivekananda: Swami Vivekananda was a great social reformer and also a spiritual leader who has done so many social activities to change the social problems. What Swami

Vivekananda has done throughout his life, it was all for the emancipation for the mankind. He believes in religion which is based on service for the mankind (Jib-seva) that is why his religion is known as the religion of service. In Swamiji's opinion in order to do any activity religion has to be behind it, because religion is the base of the society. He firmly believed in religion and also believed that social reform can only be possible through religious reform. But his religion was not God-centered but it was Man-centered. That is why he put much emphasis on religion and tried to change the traditional religion by changing the theme of the traditional religion from God to Man. He tried to find God in man. Vivekananda was strong-willed and restless. He studied philosophy, as a student of philosophy, he had various questions related to god, but there was none who could answer his questions. His life completely changed when he met with Sri Ramakrishna. He became Swami Vivekananda from Narendranath Dutta after he met Sri Ramakrishna for the second time.

It was Sri Sri Thakur Ramkrishna who had taught Vivekananda to serve for the mankind. The teaching of Sri Thakur is that "service to man is service to God." He preached "*Jiva is shiva*", (Every being is a part of God). Though he believes in spiritualism but never tried to explain liberation from the spiritual outlook. His spiritualism based on religion, and according to him religion is that will be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic and equally conducive to action. Religion is a social institution; worship is a social activity and faith a social force. Swamiji made this principle the basis of his social service programme. He taught that the best form of worship was to see God in the poor, the downtrodden, the sick and the ignorant and to serve them. (*Debprasad Mandal, Swami Vivekananda: The Great Social Reformer, Quest: Multidisciplinary Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences Volume 1 Issue 1 (July-Sep. 2014) Article No. 6, page - 2*).

He wanted to build a new social order and tried to construct a new civilization in which the best spiritual traditions of India would be combined with the latest advancement in the field of science and technology. Vivekananda was a spiritual guide of modern India. He had a call to rise and build a new India. He gave this call to Indians to "Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached." In a short life of 39 years, he produced classics such as *Janna yoga, Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga* and *raja yoga*. Swami Vivekananda said that "*Mukti* and all else appear of no consequences to me". And "sell it, if necessary we are *Sanyasins*, We ought always to be ready to sleep under the trees and live on what we beg every day".

From the above discussion it is clear that both Rammohon roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Swami Vivekananda, were intellectual personality. Rammohon roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar highlighted two important impacts. One is social and the another is ethical. We all are aware about that socially the *sati pratha* has been abolished from the society forever, polygamy has been stopped by the law, widow remarriage has been started. Ethical impact is that, they wanted to introduce a new idea by promoting an ethically and rationally reformed religion. Rammohon Roy challenged the religious leaders and shows the original sources of Hindu epics where there is no any type discussion regarding liberation where liberation means a practice of burning people. Liberation does

not consist in killing, Liberation is a bliss, or joyful moment. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar concentrated on the social and educational liberation. He does not try to liberate the society, but tried to reform the society through the educational reform. He never thought about his liberation, and has no belief in liberation which is earned spiritually, he believes in liberation which can be obtained only by liberating others who are deprived, who are ill treated, who are subjected to a lot of cruelty, who are socially backward. According to him liberation is involved in educating the uneducated people, liberation is involved in protesting against injustice, liberation is involved in extending the human value and also in promoting a value based educational system to educate the females who is considered as the most weak part of the society. Swami Vivekananda devoted his entire life to serve for the mankind. He believes in religion which is based on service for the mankind that is why his religion is known as the religion of service. Actually in India Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Swami Vivekananda, known as notable figure who voiced courageously for the emancipation of the human being. They served the society as the rationalist and humanist and emphasized on the reconstruction of the so-called society to establish liberty, equality and fraternity. By their intellectual realization Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Swami Vivekananda provided a novel, rational, practical and obviously ethical interpretation of emancipation of human life.

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