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A Comparative Analysis of the Religious Philosophies of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramana Maharshi for Positive Spiritualistic Impact on Human Mind

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Abstract:

The philosophy of Ramana Maharshi, one of the great contemporary Indian philosophers, may be said to be identical with the Advaita of Sankaracharya. Ramana Maharshi has explained very clearly the Absolut Reality, ajata-vada, the doctrine of maya, the vivartavada, pratibimbavada, jivanamukti and jnana as the ultimate means. He opines that the source of I-thought is not sunya and 'nothing', but the self-luminous consciousness, and declares that it is wrong to criticize Sankara as a maya-vadin.

Ramana Maharsri conceived the Advaita experience without having prior scriptural studies and practical disciplines. According to Ramana Maharshi, Advaita does not stand for any limited or partial perspectives, but for the complete truth which includes and transcends all the pluralistic and quasi-pluralistic formulations of it. 'I' consciousness, for Sri Ramana, has been the regenerating principle that makes distinction between the objective impermanency and what is called subjective or transcendental reality. The philosophy of Sri Ramana proceeds from 'I' consciousness to the understanding of what is Reality from transcendental point of view. No-dualism was showed by him between the objective world and the subjective world.

Vivekananda, as a famous Advaitin, keeps belief in Vedanta to be the foundation of all religions of the world. The most remarkable characteristic of such a religious philosophy are: (1) Unity of existence and (2) Essential unity of all religions. Vivekananda's very unique thinking sprung out due to the influence of the independent and free thinking of Europe, western education and culture of the second half of the eighteen century.

Vivekananda has embraced the 'Religion of the Upanishad' to be the all-embracing creative genius with a view to awakening the divinity already existing in man. Vivekananda treats religion nothing more than Vedanta. Throughout his life, he made attempt to establish that Vedanta religion could be the foundation of all the faiths of the world. Such a philosophy advocated by Vivekananda for awakening the divinity already in each and every man from within marks uniqueness in comparison to the other contemporary philosophers of Indian origin.

Keywords: *Absolute Reality, Essential Unity of all religions, 'I' consciousness, Jivanmukti, Religion of the Upanishad, Unity of existence*

Introduction: The significant merit of the religious philosophy of Vivekananda may be considered to be the effort to make union between science and religion. According to him, there exists no real fight between science and religion. Religion, for Vivekananda, should be justified by modern science. Supernaturalism is his approach towards religion where he like his Guru Ramakrishna never gave encouragement towards sectarian and orthodox Hindu religion. The greatest message of him in the domain of spiritualism is to overcome the limits of the so-called 'established religion or cultural tradition'. Vivekananda says that we should study the original sources of knowledge with a view to understanding any religion. He prefers shradha (respect) to achieve significant consequences in respect of religious discourses. Every creed. According to him, thus, makes the attempt at humanity to realize the infinity of himself.

According to Ramana Maharshi, the absolute Reality, the non-dual Brahman, infinite without parts, has been underlying all the appearances. The self-luminous 'I', Isvara or God is also a reflected light as associated with maya. He thinks that the Self alone is knowledge, the underlying consciousness, and Sri Ramana accepts the intrinsic validity of truth.

Sri Ramana has been regarded by some people to be an avatara of Lord Subrahmanya. But in one context, Sri Ramana says that he is Subrahmanya in the sense an idol is considered to be Subrahmanya. It is to be noted that Sri Ramana didn't have guru (master) in the human form, and in his case the Self also cannot be regarded as his guru, as he didn't practise meditation and like that prior to realization. That is to say, the absolute truth is said to be flashed directly into his mind.

Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of the study are:

- (i) To find out similarities of thoughts among the great two Indian philosophers.
- (ii) To establish the necessity of the analytical as well as comparative approaches in the context of Indian philosophy.
- (iii) To establish the importance of religious consciousness along with spiritualism in contemporary Indian philosophy.

Methodology:

The methods of the study were descriptive and analytical with the purpose of studying the religious philosophies of two great Indian philosophers in the context of Positive Spiritualistic Impact on human mind. Both primary and secondary data were analyzed for the study.

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From the way Sri Ramana Maharshi achieved the absolute Truth, he may be compared

with Apantaratamas, a great sage who had achieved realization in the previous birth, but owing to his *anekajanma*, i.e., many births—*prarabdha-karma* took another embodiment. The *jnani* (sane people) comes back to the *vyutthana* state from the *Samadhi* due to *vasanas* (desires), but whenever the force of the mental tendencies weakens, he once again experiences the absolute Bliss. If *sarvakarmani* includes *prarabdha-karma* also stated by Sri Raman, then one has to accept that due to the momentum of the *prarabdha-karma* only, the embodiment is possible after realization. The significant point here is that Ramana Maharshi was in *sohajasamadhi*, and his mode of preaching was ‘silence’ with the assistance of which he lifted up so many individuals from the miserable ocean of *samsara*, and really speaking, his life and teachings still serve as the Veda fulfilling this purpose.

In accordance with Vivekananda, religion possesses no boundary as logic is within the domain of *Maya*. Theories, reason are all assistance in respect of religion because religion consists in realization. Vivekananda puts—‘preaching of religion generally depends on faith. But this preaching consists only in different sects of theories which are based upon belief. These theories ultimately lead to all confusions and quarrelling with one another. Religion at this juncture becomes a pretension of truth and depends on wonder working. Every fear of the unknown becomes a childish curiosity when the Truth is attained. This can be achieved only through purity, patience and perseverance. There must be no fear. No begging but demanding....Demanding the Highest’.¹ Immanuel Kant has established that in respect of philosophy, time, space and causation are modes of thought. This was taught by Vedanta long before and called it *Maya*. Unlike Schopenhauer and Sankaracharya, Vivekananda put comment that religion consists in realization.

The lowest form of worship was bound up with the highest form of love by the thread of *Bhakti*. Religion needs man to acquire empirical facts with verification, but seeing the truth is very essential on our parts. This may be possible merely when we transcend the knowledge that is lying in the domain of the five senses. Searching God appears the one goal, the goal is not the power. The test having ceased to be an idolater, Vivekananda puts: when one says ‘I’, does the body come into his thought or not? If it does, then one is still a worshipper of idols. Religion is experience.

The view of Religious Consciousness advocated by Rudolf Otto comes near to Vivekananda. Otto was very much conscious regarding the difficulties arisen in describing religion in terms of our belief in the existence of the almighty. The existence of God, according to Otto, cannot be proved on the ground of rational thinking. There exists a non-rational awareness at the source of each and every religion which has been named by Otto the numinous feeling. This is named the intuitive experience by the mystics.

In the eyes of Hegel, the famous absolute idealist, religion is nothing more than self-subsisting essence. We detect in religion a transcendental entity underlying all particular historical representations. For Hegel, philosophy aims at knowing the truth and God. According to Hegel, truth is a detail speculative system which claims objective validity.

Kierkegaard, the renowned existentialist, showed reaction against Hegel’s philosophy

and he advocated radical faith in religion. According to Kierkegaard, if knowledge relating to religion proceeds beyond reason, then it must be understood something irrational. But comparatively in Vivekananda's philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, the subjective consciousness refers to the realization of the transcendental truth...The Atman in its real nature. To Vivekananda, the realization of the truth of the Unchangeable one may be said to be the religion for all. One is the Rishi who experiences God directly in everything. The core of religion for man is reflected here. It is not the case that Vivekananda is somehow influenced by Kierkegaard. If we go deep, then it will be seen that the subjectivity in the philosophy of Vivekananda is come out with monism as he puts that there is merely one individual and oneness is alone refers to love and fearlessness. Fear and hatred are the outcome of separation. This gospel of the Vedanta forms the religion of the Hindu. Vivekananda calls the Yoga...Union as the ideal religion. The union, for a worker, is between men and the whole of humanity. For a mystic, union is between his lower and Higher Self. Again, union to the lover is achieved between himself and the God of Love. It is union of all existence for the philosopher. In India, it is Yoga.

In Vivekananda's philosophy of religion, the significant characteristic is his comprehensive and integral vision. His superb contribution all over the globe in the sphere of religion is the 'Religion for Mankind.' He advocated religion above every difference of race, nationality, culture, creed and the like. Vivekananda finds the divine self of man as man, for Vivekananda, is the symbolic representation of the Divinity. Thus, 'Divinity of Man' and 'Essential Spirituality' may be named the two fundamental established truths of the religious philosophy of Vivekananda. In this way, religion of Vivekananda is turned synonymous with universalism of the spirit.

To Ramana Maharshi, duality appears for the appearance of the I-thought. Sri Ramana in a clear and distinct way, elaborates the 'witness-consciousness' and explains perceptions to be 'Being' not to be 'seeing'. The individual self is merely the ego, the illusory revelation that in truth is identical with Isvara. According to Ramana Maharshi, the enquiry into the three states of experience including five sheaths too leads to the same truth of the non-dual Self. He comments that the word is mental and maya, the cause of the world, is itself illusory. It is to be concluded that the creator, the created and the creation are all illusory appearance.

But, there is certainly the possibility of question: If creation is illusory appearance caused by ignorance or avidya, then how liberation is the realization of the natural original state by the destruction of this ignorance or avidya? Because it seems to be a paradox of 'I' casting off the illusion of 'I' and yet remaining as 'I'. In such a context, Sri Raman clearly declares that no classification of the realized exists, since knowledge is merely one. The classification like this can, from the perspective of the ignorant, only be accounted for by the difference in the prarabdha-karma. There remains no possibility for any action posterior to realization while there is no ego in the same people. But whatever action that we notice in his body makes us to infer the existence of mind; the truth refers to the basanas which become the cause of enjoyment that is again the effect of the past works, get

revealed as actions, the consequence of which has to surely be experienced.

According to Sri Ramana, the actual objective of the religious life is to be aware of the true 'I' and to remain in it. The creator is responsible for the world of creation designed and sustained by His will where there remains no 'duty' as such for the individual whose 'free-will' is merely as appearance of his karmas of the past. The secret of ethics is not to identify the self with one's own body.

Sri Ramana says that self-enquiry through right paths of knowledge is the means to liberation. In this enquiry, one has to discard the not-self from the real 'I' in the first stage, and be in the source of 'I'-thought, the experience of the non-dual Brahman. The three steps to reach the destined goal are Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana. Whenever the identity of the jiva with Isvara is realized by the aspirant, the world of duality disappears for him. The different yogas, karmas, bhakti etc. appear as the preliminary assistances for the aspirant to attain required qualifications of dispassion and concentration. To Sri Ramana, one receives emancipation whenever one realizes the karma-yoga, bhakti-yoga, etc. If he is not capable of doing the said enquiry, then complete surrender to God and karma-yoga may be the means for cleaning his mind and strengthen him for the higher stage.

It may be said that the thinking of Ramana Maharshi seems to be almost identical with the Advaita philosophy of Aadiguru Sankaracharya. Sri Ramana elaborates the Absolute Reality, ajatavada, the doctrine of maya, the vivartavada, pratibimba-vada, jivanamukti and jnana as the ultimate means. According to Sri Ramana, the source of 'I-thought' is not sunya or 'nothing' rather the self-luminous consciousness, and declares it is not justified to criticize Sankara as just maya-vadin.

Ramana's deep thinking in respect of reality which has been described by him as transcending seer, sight and seen, or knower, knowledge and known paves the way to religious contemplation in his life. In accordance with Ramana Maharshi, the 'reality—consciousness' or the 'I-consciousness' is the central point of his deep religious thoughts. The nature of Reality has been explained by Sri Ramana as eternal and is 'existence' having no either starting or end. It appears everywhere, it's endless and infinite; it underlines from force, matter and spirit and the triads of knower, knowledge and known etc. has been displaced and transcended by it which are mere appearances in it.

Ramana Maharshi says that there cannot have parts in respect of what is infinite and perfect. To become perfect, the finite being will have to be associated with the infinite. He rejects that there are levels of Reality; there exists merely levels of experience in respect of individual. The Absolute is eternal; whatever exists in space and time and is achieved, can be lost and therefore is not real. The waking body does not have experience either in dream or in profound sleep, instead there always exists Self. In sleep, the Self is pure consciousness; it evolves as 'I' (aham) without 'this' (idam) in the transition stage; and gets manifest in the waking state as 'I' and 'this'. The universal principle does the correspondence between the ideas 'within' and the objects 'without'. According to Sri

Ramana, the body and the world are merely external to oneself and merely the 'heart' reveals in all these. In the domain of pure mind, the self-luminous 'I' always shines in the core of the all-comprehensive Heart. In everybody, it reflects and is called the omniscient witness or the fourth state. Therefore, the infinite expanse may be named the Reality, the supreme spirit or the Self which shines as the consciousness within the 'I', as the one in all human beings. Reality does not indicate the unconsciousness of the deep-sleep state or the self-consciousness of the present.

Ramana Maharshi can be treated as one of the greatest contemporary Indian religious thinkers. His religious philosophical perspective has been well appreciated worldwide. In accordance with him, the religious force in man can transform into a spiritual one. Ramana Maharshi says that the goal of religious life is to realize its real nature so that one can realize the supreme spiritual Reality which beyond spatio-temporal existence, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. Ramana Maharshi puts, "The Absolute is eternal; what exists in space and time and is gained, can be lost."² According to Ramana Maharshi, the 'Being' or 'Existence' which is undeniable in respect of all states is the Reality. Therefore, consciousness is the reality, the unchanging common factor in self-consciousness, unconsciousness, sub-consciousness, super-consciousness, human-consciousness, dog-consciousness and the tree-consciousness.

Man, according to Ramana Maharshi, is to realize the real nature of the self within and understand the meaninglessness of the outward existence. He says that religion must come from the spirit within and not from the external agents like flesh-blood compound, caste, creed, cult, convention. In accordance with him, the pure Being, the goal of a real religious life, becomes spread through darkness, the original ignorance or original sin, comes out as illuminated light called Isvara or God. Isvara, the reflected light, is known to be associated with maya which is the original ignorance. Sri Ramana says that God is omnipresent, acts through all, but the actions are seen clearly in pure minds. He puts that the unification between the self and the God or Isvara and God-realization lead one's religious life perfect. Monotheism has been maintained by him in association with the Vedanta trend of beliefs. Sri Ramana, in support to Aadiguru Sankaracharya, asserts that Sankaracharya has mistakenly been criticized to be mayavadin. Three statements have been advocated by Sankara: Brahman is real, the universe is unreal, and Brahman is the universe. The third statement incorporates the first two statements denoting that the perception of the universe without the existence of Brahman becomes illusory. The phenomena experienced as the Self are real, while perceived apart from the Self become illusory.

The purest form of Advaita was advocated by Vivekananda and Ramana Maharshi. Vivekananda was carefully chosen by his master Sri Ramakrishna for spreading his mission of oneness and the transcendent unity of religions based on Advaita. He taught the West the Advaita as a corrective to signify varieties and as a way for realizing what is called spiritual harmony. Truly speaking, Vivekananda created a spiritual revolution in the minds of Indian people through Advaita and he kept belief that merely by Advaita, a secured lasting unity and strength among all religions would be possible. Ramana

Maharshi attained Advaita experience without taking recourse to any preparatory discipline and the sage remained in the natural state (sahaja) after getting such experience. He took silence and words as medium of instruction of the aspirants of the world used to approach him.

The significant point that we see in Vivekananda is that he very earnestly desired to reject the outward observances of religious practices. He wished us to penetrate into the depth of facts than only external perfection. Else, religious doctrines are equivalent to just dead principles. Every vision of truth has been identified by Vivekananda with a vision of God. He puts that all are born to rediscover own Godly nature. According to him, man starts as a dualist in the relation of God. Consequently, God is being parted from us and love enters in between. The title self becomes one with the infinite since each and every relation has been dissolved by being a monist. Naturally, Vivekananda, as an Advaita thinker, asserts that hypocrisy cannot sustain where God exists. He, being greatly influenced by his Guru Ramakrishna, says it is love that binds man to man than binding man to the infinite. This, of course, may be named a superb representation of his practical Vedanta. In this way, it is followed that his religion denotes expansion and expansion indicates realization and perfection in the highest sense. The realization of man regarding the divinity will ultimately pave the way for an infinite material and spiritual progress. According to Vivekananda, the eternal world is governed by the realization of the self because he makes unification of differences between matter, mind and spirit (self). Religion indicates reaching God where one realizes that 'I am a spirit' in revelation. The remarkable principle of religion in Vivekananda's philosophy is 'the manifestation of perfection is already in man'.

Vivekananda expects for the time when the Vedanta will be accepted and worshipped together with shalagrama...the household Deity. Here, we may notice the deviation of Vivekananda from the classical Vedanta trend. Therefore, it may well be said that the philosophy of Vivekananda attains culmination of the intellect of Sankara and the heart of Buddha. Vivekananda, thus, proceeds towards conclusion that he is an atheist who does not possess belief in the existence of God with contradiction to the classical theological concept. Thus, the supernaturalism of Vivekananda represents the natural and harmonious development of the power latent in man. He calls this latent force the Impersonal God revealed in man in the form of Divinity. That is why Vivekananda asserts that reality in all men must be the object of worship. To him, religion is nothing more than the experience of life and one's personal enrichment may become possible only through service to mankind.

Conclusion: The concept of humanism based on the principle of Advaita philosophy may be said to be the most significant point in Vivekananda. According to him, Advaita may be the best system in the world if we desire to become both rational and religious. The Upanishads have determined the spiritualistic humanism by their dictum so Ham... I am Brahman, I am Brahman. Humanity, to Vivekananda, is immortality as we are all immortal as parts of the whole. This may be said to be the essence of religion of Vivekananda.

Vivekananda prescribes the universal religion which is to be accepted by each and

every one. According to him, the largest possible proportion of man must be satisfied by it and thereby all the aspects of religion viz., philosophy, emotion, work and mysticism are to be harmoniously balanced. The conflicts of all sects should be superseded by the universal religion and, so, should stand reasonable and satisfying to them all. Really speaking, Vivekananda desired through his concept of universal religion understanding and brotherhood world-wide.

Ramana Maharshi asserts that the aim of religion aims at realizing and understanding the supreme spiritual Reality beyond spatio-temporal existence. Ramana Maharshi has been the living example of the teachings of the Upanishads. His life appears the message and the philosophy of his teachings. The heart of every man has been touched by his sayings. Sri Maharshi detected himself within and put forward his message of his great life 'Know Thyself'. He approved lots of ways and practices, but self-investigation has been recommended by him as the principal way of removing ignorance. He inspired all to take recourse to Self-awareness, together with devotion or surrender to the Self.

The life of Sri Maharshi reveals that philosophy sustains everywhere. He may be termed as the living example of the truth of Advaita Vedanta. Literally he embodies the 'Advaita joke' that 'I was an atheist until I realized I was God.' Seemingly funny, the joke bears very important message. The three uses of 'I' indicate three stages of consciousness: i) 'unripe ego' or the self-centered individual, ii) 'ripe ego' or a sincere seeker of Truth. Thirdly, 'I' refers to the identity with Brahman.

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