PREFACE

I have chosen to work on this topic with an intention of making a deep study of Swami Vivekananda’s conception of the dignity of the human person. I have taken up this task with the aim of giving a clear and systematic exposition of the seminal aspect of Swami Vivekananda’s Philosophy. The objective of the thesis is to highlight Vivekananda’s contention that human dignity consists in the realization of the divinity inherent in the person. The thesis seeks to justify Vivekananda’s position that the perception of oneself and the other as the manifestation of the absolute Spirit is indispensable for the establishment of an altruistic and egalitarian society in which all are treated with dignity and freedom. The objective of the thesis is also to emphasize the relevance of Vivekananda’s conception of the ideal man and divine dignity to the transformation of the contemporary society which is riddled with the problems like poverty, hunger, injustice, inequality, division, conflict and violence. Realization of the metaphysical nature of oneself and that of others resolves the crisis of discrimination, degeneration and degradation of humanity.

A review of literature published so far on Vivekananda shows that there is hardly any work that has been devoted to an exclusive study of his conception of human dignity. I hope this thesis will fill this gap as it proposes to present a comprehensive picture of the ideal of human dignity and freedom as Vivekananda has
expounded in his writings and speeches. As a work totally devoted to an in depth study of an important dimension of Vivekananda's thought, the thesis will significantly contribute to a deeper understanding of Vivekananda's vision of the universal man. It will also contribute to a better appreciation of his philosophy of one man and one world. The thesis may also serve as a reference work at the college and university levels in case of its publication.

The method followed in writing this thesis is expository, since the thesis proposes to give a systematic exposition of Vivekananda's conception of the dignity of the human person. The research material relating to the topic has been collected mainly from the primary sources of the eight volumes of Vivekananda's writings and speeches. Material from the secondary sources has also been utilized. The relevant material has been well organized and systematically presented. The presentation is argumentative and supported by the quotations from the original and secondary sources.

The thesis proposes to present the theme in the following six chapters. Chapter one is Introduction. This chapter gives a brief introduction to the theme of the thesis. It gives the etymological meaning and significance of the dignity of the human person. It also deals in brief with the implications of the divinity inherent in the human being for equality and dignity. It brings out spirit-to-spirit relationships among people as the basis for human relations of freedom and dignity.
Chapter two is *The Life and Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda*. This is devoted to a detailed account of the important events of Vivekananda's life like birth and childhood, education, spiritual awakening and has participation in the parliament of world religions. It also brings out in brief Vivekananda's philosophy of human dignity and the mission of his practical Vedanta.

Chapter three is *The Concept of Man and Dignity – A Philosophical Perspective*. This chapter brings out the conception of man and dignity according to Vedanta, Buddhism, Marxism and Existentialism. It elucidates the idea of human dignity as conceived by the contemporary Indian thinkers like Tagore, Gandhi, Ambedkar and Krishnamurti. It also presents in brief Vivekananda's concept of the dignity of the human person.

Chapter four is *Swami Vivekananda's Conception of the Dignity of the Human Person – A Metaphysical Perspective*. This chapter deals in detail with the Vedantic conception of divinity as the dignity of the human being as enunciated by Vivekananda in his writings. It deals with Vivekananda's contention that metaphysical freedom and perfection are the true source of human dignity. It explains Vivekananda's view that human being assumes dignity as the maker of his or her own destiny. *Human beings alone are capable of attaining the divine dignity which is the basis of social and political dignity of the person. It discusses the topics such as divinity and dignity, the real and apparent man, perfection*
and dignity, freedom and dignity, and man as the maker of his
destiny.

Chapter five is Vivekananda’s Conception of the Dignity of
the Human Person – A Social Perspective. This chapter aims at
elucidating the implications of the divine dignity of the person for
the individual and social well-being. It discusses in detail the
issues like the practical Vedanta, privileges, universal brotherhood,
education, women, and human rights in relation to the problem of
the dignity of the human person. It also focuses on the significance
of Vivekananda’s conception of spiritual humanism for human
dignity.

Chapter six is Conclusion. Besides presenting a brief review
of the themes discussed in the preceding chapters, the concluding
chapter critically examines Vivekananda’s conception of the dignity
of the human person in the light of his views on the system of
caste. It gives a comparative and critical account of Vivekananda’s
ideal of human dignity by considering it in the light of what the
other contemporary thinkers like Gandhi and Ambedkar have said
about human dignity and freedom. It also critically evaluates the
significance of Vivekananda’s views on human dignity for the
protection of human rights and promotion of universal peace and
harmony. It also shows the contemporary relevance of
Vivekananda’s conception of human dignity for the growth of India
as a developed nation.