Meaning of Religion

Vivekananda said: “As so many rivers, having their source in different mountains, roll down, crooked or straight and at last come into the ocean; so, all these various creeds and religions, taking their start from different standpoints and running through crooked or straight courses, at last come unto Thee” (CWSV 1:390).

Religion is the supreme thought of human being. People came to know about the deep love as well as hatred through religion. It teaches us to love every neighbour as our own brothers. Also it condemned the attitude of envying others. They are the only two qualities from which creatures are made. Men who are interested in religious plane alone could know the meaning for peace and renunciation. By reading Vedas and listening to the moral of epic, one could get his mind satisfied at least for a few hours. If a person meets mysteries in his life, he will certainly feel like denouncing this world of religion. Thus religion has multi-faceted attitudes. It teaches how to be happy and how to help others.

Every religion has three parts in it. They are Philosophy, Mythology and Ritual. Philosophy conveys the purpose of religion with its basic principles and the way to reach its goal. Mythology speaks of the lives of men or supernatural beings. It expresses imaginary lives of men
and God or devils. Ritual talks about forms and ceremonies and the application of senses. In a country there are varieties of human beings like men and women, white and black, strong and weak but all belong to humanity. It is the Universal religion which runs through in various religions of the world in the form of God. All the creatures cannot look alike. They vary in shapes and features but all are living beings and are one with the whole universe. Vivekananda said that variety is the first principle of life.

Christopher Isherwood documented that as the water takes the shape of the container either a cup or a bucket, religion also gets its recognition or definite shape from the mind of a man. Realization of God is like water in the vessel. Each one of us in this world wants to see God but its form varies from one another.

Acceptance is the only watchword which builds up fellow feeling between different religions. It shoots out from mutual esteem and mutual respect.

Fanaticism is synonymous with lunacy. Without fanaticism world can see more progress. It rouses the people’s attitude such as hostility, anger, rivalry and makes them unsympathetic. Thousands will be ready to chop their brethren. Vivekananda wrote,

Religion is realization, but mere talk---mere trying to believe, mere groping in darkness, mere parroting the words of ancestors
and thinking it is religion, mere making a political something out
of the truths of religion - is not religion at all. (CWSV 3:378)

Religion ought to be studied deeply to bring peace to all people
and also to build up character. Religious ideas have to become universal,
vast and infinite. His speeches at the Parliament of Religion held at
Chicago impressed the audience so much so that they wanted to listen to
his further deliverance. His first utterance “Brothers and Sisters of
America” (1:1) magnetized the spectators. Further he added that he
belonged to the religion which has taught the world both tolerance and
universal acceptance. He was proud to be an Indian; because India has
sheltered the refugees of all religions.

Under the caption, “Why we disagree?” he thanked America for
her attempt to break the barriers of religions. He told a story of a frog to
illustrate the cause of variance. A frog in a well once met a frog from an
ocean. It could not admit that ocean is bigger than its well. This is due to
its ignorance of the outside world. Similarly people who belonged to one
religion do not want to come out of their shell. This is because of their
ignorance of the rest of the world and other religions. As far as
Vivekananda is concerned, that the religion which taught us tolerance and
universality is the true religion.

Through his address entitled “Religion not the crying need of
India,” Vivekananda took courage to put forth his strong opposition
against the activities of Christian missionaries. He pointed out their
mistakes of erecting churches in India at the time of famine at its peak. He also stressed the necessity of aid for impoverished people. Religion comprises two aspects – one is individual and the other is social. It does not depend upon the opinions of some men. Man must have the freedom of his view as long as it is not harmful to society. Like the film-house and the stadium, it will be useful only to a portion of the society. A regular course of acculturation is provided by nature as well as by human learning-centre like the family and the society. The necessity of higher virtues for instance “Unselfishness” is an obvious fact. If all the members of the society are selfish the society will split into pieces. So unselfish attitude paves the way for unity and peace.

By regular training from childhood, one can attain the virtue of unselfishness. Of all the agencies working for this purpose, it is religion that boldly proclaims its purpose. Moreover it places the greatest emphasis on the virtues and provides a philosophical perspective which becomes convincing. Mere intellectual understanding is not enough. A belief in a higher being and in a divine order of things is more useful. Otherwise at weaker moments they revert to their base nature. If religion is abolished, in a few hundred years the law of the jungle will again prevail. Hence it is clear that to keep the society going, higher virtues are essential and religion is the greatest and best agency and so is an imperative necessity.
Vivekananda’s message to the sannyasin said, “A sannyasin never belongs to any religion, for his is a life of independent thought which draws from all religions, his is a life of realization, not merely of theory or belief, much less of dogma” (CWSV 5:260)

In this world there is only one religion that is human being. This can be accepted only by the extreme personality like the sannyasin. His is the perfect life because he need not belong to any caste or creed. He has a life of independent thought which is a mixture of all religious principles. He can alone realize the real meaning of life. He cannot be controlled by any scientific theory or false belief or principles. It is clear that living for the betterment of others is the only duty of a man. In turn if he is in the family he cannot dedicate much time to others; instead his mind will be obsessed with his family commitments.

While comparing life and religion, Vivekananda said that a secularist falls under two categories: egoist and socialist. The first category is satisfied with following their individual’s likes and dislikes, personal enjoyment and happiness. They do not care for others’ welfare. They however are denounced by the religious as well as the socialistic people. But the second group minds society more and is interested in social growth. They want to be free from all restraints.

While taming the backward classes, Vivekananda often warned that the pious outlook should not get disturbed, for nothing constructive can be rooted in society in one generation. At present, many of the old
customs will have to be changed. He advised us not to lose the higher moorings imbedded in them and adjust them to the new surroundings by new interpretation and by evolving new habits.

S.C. Sen Gupta stated that Vivekananda’s views on the religious unity implied that every religion is built upon a few basic principles, but the principles have some differences also. This is due to diverse cultures, languages and approaches. A cosmopolitan outlook has begun to grow. Religion has a great molding influence upon the aim, aspiration and action of men.

As per the rules of the *Sastras*, three types of food are not fit for eating. They are defective, contaminated and touched by a wicked man. The bane of our country is that people admit culprits, drunkards and poachers in their caste but never allow one from lower caste. In the modern trend people admit marriages between sub-divisions. They are unaware of the constitutional diseases produced by marrying cousins and near relations. This is due to enmity towards other religion.

Das Gupta observed that Vivekananda himself frankly stated that he is neither a caste-breaker nor a social reformer. He preached love and love only based on *Vedanta* truth. He has considered “don’t-touchism” as an unorthodox-superstition. It is better to raise spirituality by leaving aside “touch-me not-ism” and considering kitchen-pot as deity. There was also another drawback that “don’t-touchism” paved the way for increasing the number of members in Christianity. People blindly accept
the food prepared by anyone who wears a thread across his waist---Brahmin.

The above discussions clearly picture that don’t-touchism is a kind of disease. It gives importance to unimportant things. If one wants to call himself a member of a higher caste, he must have to treat the least in birth as equal. Efforts must be put forth to bring to the fore the downtrodden socially and economically.

Before the emergence of a social programme, the basic principles of its components have to be cleared out. To Vivekananda, caste is the universal phenomenon. It is baptized by the society through hereditary belief. It is not a sole property of an individual but it is a common possession. In other countries wealth, power, intellect and beauty can be used as instruments to change one’s status. But here it is not so. He blew out the crystallized, hereditary caste system and the “don’t touchism.” The solution is not by bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher. On the whole Vivekananda was for the abolition of all privileges based on caste.

What is Philosophy?

Through the words of J.L. Shaw that the word philosophy is a compound of two Latin words --- Philo meaning love and Sophia meaning wisdom. So it means love of wisdom and the pursuit of wisdom in the history of western thought. The evolution of philosophy or religious
thought in ancient India has three distinct stages --- polytheism, monotheism and monism. Each leads the other. The creators of this wisdom are the philosophers. Thus Vivekananda is considered as a philosopher. The *Vedanta* philosophy which is the philosophy of Vivekananda emerges out of a *Vedic* religion.

For Vivekananda religion is the foundation of philosophy. To understand him as a philosopher is important for us to see his ideas about the relationship between philosophy and religion.

Vivekananda contributed the age old non-dualistic philosophy of India in the light of modern milieu. The feature of his philosophy focused on harmony, oneness, morality, the law of *karma* and liberation. He has introduced new categories for solving some of the problems of philosophy of religion, ethics and metaphysics.

His oneness can resolve all sorts of moral, social and religious conflicts. By applying *Vedic* method, the conflicts between righteous action, worldly possessions, pleasure and liberation have been resolved by arranging them in a hierarchy. Righteous action includes our duties towards human beings, animals and nature. Worldly possessions---*artha*, pleasure---*karma* are subservient to *dharma* and the latter would lead us to liberation---*moksha* which is the ultimate goal of life.

Vivekananda’s method can be called oneness or unity in diversity. He has illustrated the following lines from *Vedas* in several places, “That which exists in one, but sages call it by various names.” (Shaw 6)
This is the freedom from sufferings and the realization of certain moral and spiritual values. Every religion must accept the universality of virtues such as brotherhood, friendship, compassion and justice. He claimed that the principles of religion and ethics must be justified by reason and are independent of all supernatural beings such as God, the universal spirit or the absolute.

As regards the paths for the realization of the ultimate goal of life, he has postulated unity among them. Hence there is no conflict between the path of action, the path of knowledge and the path of devotion of love. Conflict is the source of suffering and unhappiness. He has applied novelty in the concept of unity found in *Vedanta*. He has also solved some of the problems of morality and the law of *Karma* in Indian philosophy.

Regarding love, he said that love for everyone was the great faith which would make the world better. Religion existed through love and not in ceremony. Love opened all the secrets of the universe. It also made everyone see god in others. A person who ceases to do good to others is considered as dead. Spiritually positive action would alleviate the suffering of others. A real householder should open his house to everyone and to offer food for others. Then only he would be a lover of god. His socialism is more comprehensive and all-encompassing. His entire world belonged to one religion. Every moral action, according to Vivekananda must be unselfish. If it is unselfish, even the thought of doing well to
others or the desire to do well to others has moral value. The right performance of the duties of any stage in life, without attachment to results leads to the highest realization of the perfection of the soul. Freedom means unselfish actions. Through this it is clear that all the four aspects --- unity, unselfishness, divinity and freedom --- are linked in a thread that runs through the contents of the religions of the world.

To do good is the hallmark of Vivekananda’s philosophy. The salient feature of this is his principles of gradation of degrees of goodness and truth seen through the glass of time, space and causation. He devoted his life to the task of revitalizing the age-old religion and philosophy of India.

Vivekananda’s practical Vedanta says that by eradicating priest craft and worshipping man with good deeds is real piety. He does not want to differentiate animals and men. If one realizes that the human body is the temple and that moment itself he is free from bondage and everything that binds him vanishes. This is possible only through worshipping living gods. Old theory of believing the god in human and worshipping blindly are impractical and the Vedanta says that each one must have his own path.

Privilege is the bane of human life. To get progress in the race, one must break down privileges such as making caste, the strong over the weak, wealth, intellect and spirituality. The main work of the Advaita is to cut down all the above privileges. Instead of worshipping idols it is good
to keep faith in one’s near and dear. If so there is no past or future life. It is foolish to neglect the living god. Only the imaginary shadows pave way for fights and quarrels.

Superhuman can be enjoyed in childhood because it is innocence that makes him believe god in everything but as it grows and mixes up with this world full of bluffs, the idea vanishes like a ripple on the face of the water. Ever since it stops encountering god and see only the devil. Through Aesop’s fable, Vivekananda explains that it is only perseverance that conquers the human mind. On seeing its reflection in a lake, a stag said to his young one that he has powerful splendid head and strong masculine legs to run. As soon as it heard the bark of a hound, it took to its heels. After several miles of running, the young one enquires the reason for his panic-striken running and panting. To respond to its query, the stag said that the terrific noise of bark made him lose his confidence. This is a mere replica of human life. Even a strong and valiant man may fall into temptation. It will be banished through repeated practice of meditation.

Vivekananda emphasized thought as a propelling fire in every human mind. Mind must be filled with the highest thought. Repeated listening of good things and continuous thinking of the same without minding failures lead one to god’s home. Passing hurdles and meeting failures are the beauty of life. At any cost one should hold the ideals of ones own. It promotes man to see god in everything.
Thought and action leave an impression on the mind that is subconscious awareness. The present position is a mere effect of the sum total of all the impressions of past life. If a man continuously hears abusive words, having bad thoughts, do bad actions, his mind will be full of bad impressions. The outcome of this is that he would become a bad man. On the contrary, if he does good deeds he will be considered good a man of good character. Through a simple story, Vivekananda stresses the power of good deed. Vivekananda’s ideas on Karma yoga state that as the tortoise tucks its feet and head inside the shell, so the character of that man who has a control over his motives and organs is unchangeably established. This kind of man might be placed amidst any companion, there will be no danger for him.

The word “love” is very difficult to understand and love never comes until there is freedom. There is no true love possible in the slave. For example, if one buys slave and ties him down in chain and makes him work, he will work like a drudge but there will be no love in him. “One must work like a master and not as a slave” (Shaw). It is the hallmark of Vivekananda.

Shaw’s analysis showed that Vivekananda’s views on Sankhya philosophy said that it has its origin in the Hindu philosophical tradition. He had a unified comprehensive view of Indian philosophy in all its various aspects; hence he attained this universality. The word Sankhya means relating to number, enumeration or calculation. It is a
philosophical system which enumerates the essence of experience in the world, its ultimate aim being attainment of liberation or moksha. Vivekananda values it as the first and the foremost stage of all the philosophies which mark the highest altitude of Indian thought from Vedanta. The subject presents two moving eternal ultimates. They are Purusha meaning spirit and Prakrati meaning Nature. The latter possesses three qualities namely Sattva, Rajas and Tamas that is goodness, dynamism and indifference. These are the perfect equipoise in Prakriti; when it is disturbed, the world of the senses comes into existence. It is the beginning of the human universe. Sankhya proceeds to analyze the evolution of Prakriti through the operation of many various categories Buddhi - intelligence, Ahamkara - self consciousness and Manas - mind. The ten Indriyas are categorized into five tanmantras, that is Sound, Touch, Colour, Taste and Smell and five Mahabhutas that is Space, Wind, Fire, Water and Earth. These are essential for the evolution of the Universe. The Sankhya philosophy is meant to give everyone an escape from unhappiness. It is a philosophy of Moksha or salvation. It is based on an awareness of what is around us. It is true on two grounds. One is, it goes into the world of senses and of suffering, how it is created and how it works. Secondly, it does not pose an absolute because it is based on an awareness of innumerable souls which must have their salvation.
Self Realization

Christopher Isherwood’s writings picture Vivekananda’s seven steps to Realization. They are Sama and Dama which mean keeping the organ in their canters. This is of course like harnessing one’s mind from wandering to get perfection in life. Titiksha means idea of forbearance. This helps to face dangers, pain, insult etc. Uparati means abandoning thought of sense objects. Sraddha is unwaning faith in god. Samadhana is constant practice of holding the mind in god. Mumukshutva is the earnest desire for liberation. It has balanced understanding of real nature that is neither optimism nor pessimism. Nityanitya-Viveka talks about the capacity to discriminate between what is permanent and what is impermanent.

Self-Realization through knowledge says that it is natural that man put forth his whole efforts in search of God. His inner-consciousness instructs him that God is in heaven and He is ruling the world. This is due to his ignorance which exists in his own self. It is obvious that down from the ancient days, there have been various sects of thought but without holding any formulation. This meant that anyone can choose his own form and philosophy to establish his own sect.

Vivekananda first of all introduced the school of dualists. They said God is the Creator of the universe and is eternal. He might be called human God who took nature as a raw material to create this whole universe. While talking about religions of India, Europe and Western
Asia, he added that they all were dualists. If something is pleasant to their intellect, they would accept it as God. It is common for a human being that under the rule of merciful god, there are so many evils in the world. One of the principles of dualists says that all earthly-born creatures would one day reach salvation after having undergone various enjoyments and sufferings. It is their belief that there is a place at the end of the universe filled with happiness with the presence of god. There is no cycle of birth and death in it. There are possibilities for worms and humans to attain this place where there would be no miseries.

The Vedanta philosophy started with those of qualified non-dualists. They adopted a peculiar theory that god, nature and the soul are one. There is no end for soul, instead it would contract and expand at birth and at death respectively. Both the dualists and the qualified non-dualists accepted that soul is pure. Because of the wayward deeds, it gets impure.

Vivekananda stated that Advaitists are of difficult components who could play two roles that they acted as creators and also the created. All the creatures under one roof are of one unity, their existence of physical, mental, moral and spiritual are all one. Through the ideas of Vedas, it is clear that Indian religious thought begins with dualism, enter into qualified non-dualism and ends in perfect non-dualism. If a person put aside all his desires of the world that very man will become god.
It is the advice of Vivekananda that one must stick to truth which supports him to be strong. Any system which weakens the mind of one turns him to be superstitious and makes him desire all sorts of wild impossibilities and also indulge in mysteries. So strength is the medicine for all diseases in the world. It gives remedy when the poor will be over-powered by the rich, by the ignorant, and by the strong. This is the idea of Monism. So *Vedanta* is the only prayer to reach the goal of life which makes us realize that divinity is within ourselves in order to get strength.

While giving explanation to hallucination, Vivekananda said that there is no existence of earth or heaven or hell. If a child was supposed to listen to a story of a ghost, it will see the ghost in the darkness whenever it comes across a stump of tree. The same tree appears as sweetheart to the lover. For policemen it seems to be thief and vice versa. It is the same stump of a tree which was seen in various ways. Due to the impression on the mind, reality appears in various forms.

His discussions on Self-Realization pointed that through *Raja Yoga* one can analyze his mind to gather the facts of super sensuous world in order to build up the spiritual world. Some of the steps are giving up all the ideas of enjoyment, having deep desire to know Truth and God and harness the mind from going forward. The Author of *Newsweek* observed and said,

all the four celebrities, J.D. Salinger, Leo Tolstoy, Nikola Tesla and Sarah Bernhardt have been surprised and influenced by
Swamiji, the pied piper of the global yoga movement. He is the pioneer in introducing the word ‘yoga’ in to the national conversation. (Bardach)

_Raja Yoga_ is the scientific method for approaching the Absolute. As a child, he has been taught to concentrate only on external things but never internal things. It is a drawback of every individual who has nearly lost the habit of observing the internal mechanism. First one must try to turn the mind toward inside. It helps him to concentrate all its powers which are stored up in the brain. This gives a chance to know the nature of mind. Though it is very difficult to analyze, it is worthwhile to learn the reality of one’s mind. It helps to remove all our difficulties in this world. Through his analysis, when man comes to know that he is perfect, he will have no more vain desires. The goal of _raja-yoga_ is to teach about concentration which plays a vital role in every field of existence. It is very obvious that there is no necessity to have faith in religion or god. Until finding the truth by oneself, he need not believe anything. It is of course a long process which needs constant practice. It is mainly a mental practice. On the course of it, one can realize that mind is connected with the body. That is how the wise saying comes, “sound mind makes sound body.” The power of control in man is a little higher than that of the lower animal. It is very clear that a man who has committed a great blunder can be compared with mean animals on the streets or in the forests. First of all, body must be sufficiently controlled by adjusting with available food
materials and to adjust in various climatic conditions. Then attempts must be made to manipulate the mind which helps to bring the mind under control and make desired work through good concentration.

Vivekananda said that people could not judge the world as good or evil. It depends upon their minds. A youngman may say that there is a beautiful life before him. On the other hand the old can feel that all their golden days have gone without getting fulfillment of their desires. But through the vision of Vivekananda both of them are wrong in their assumption. Thus according to the state of mind, life looks good or evil. It is like the qualities of fire. It could cook food and give warmth at times and it can also burn our finger. Thus a man could enjoy comfort and discomfort due to the power of his mind. Here Vivekananda gives an example for doing good. Indirectly it does evil side by side without the knowledge of a doer. For example, if a person speaks hours together of good dealing, indirectly he is killing thousands of microbes. So good and evil are like two sides of the same coin. There will be no way out of this intricate maze. There is no end to this inevitable association of good and evil in the results of work.

While analyzing self-realization through selfless work that is *Karma Yoga*, Vivekananda confirmed that in the highest man’s life, there would be no binding element, no attachment and no ignorance. Human society varies from country to country. It is our duty to have faith in ourselves first and then it will lead to god. Vivekananda quoted an
incident from *Bhagavad-Gita* that Srikrishna called Arjuna a hypocrite and a coward due to his refusal to fight against his own friends and relatives. He made a plea that non-resistance was the highest ideal of love. Each one must learn this greatest lesson. It is reported that “Buddha’s impact could be seen in Swamiji’s vision of life. He has praised Buddha for his observations of *Karma-yoga* in daily walks of life” (Ashutoshanandar 9). The renunciation of Buddha is true of all who left the throne for the sake of making better society. He is an example of real *Karma yogi*. He has preached the highest philosophy. He had the deepest sympathy for the lowest animals. He never attempted to claim for himself. Thus the ideal of this *Karma yogi* was entirely without motive. One cannot expect this from a beggar who has nothing to renounce.

It is the idea of Vivekananda that man must undergo all sorts of enjoyments before he becomes a sannyasin. It will definitely give calmness, serenity and self-surrender. This experience is common in our life time. The person received excess of something leads him to dislike of the same thing. After belching, a man cannot eat or drink further. It is quite natural. So man’s life could be divided into enjoyment and sufferings, and he has to work for his salvation. Another example for better understanding of renunciation is that a new-born baby could neither walk nor run. If someone attempted to make the baby do so, the baby would die or crawl again at the most. This is the condition of a common man who is loitering amidst material life. Instead of shutting himself in
the caves and praying to god, it is better to be a householder and do good to some people. For example, the Hindu begins his life as a student, then marries and becomes a family man and then at old age, he retires and gives up the world in order to become a Sannyasin. At every stage, he has to undergo certain duties. By this, his work in this world will be completed. Thus quite contrary to his life, Vivekananda preferred celibate to married man because of the former’s dedication towards religious work.

While talking about perfection, Vivekananda pointed out the conflict of internal and external nature. In daily life, man is struggling to get his food and air. In this struggle, both the parties that is Man on one side and Food and Air on the other side should not get defeated. If one defeated the other, the loss will be for man’s life. This struggle for life is a continuous process. This compound struggle between internal and external world meets its end. There comes an end to life. The cessation of this struggle is called ideal happiness. Shortly the idea signifies that life is a struggle and it must be faced boldly.

His elucidation about self-realization through love of God that is Bhakti Yoga is a search of the Lord. It begins, continues and ends in love. This extreme love brings eternal freedom. All the three Yogas, Bhakti, Karma and Raja must be given equal importance to get balance in one’s life.
As per Vivekananda, one who employs methods to impart religion becomes a true teacher who gets the power of drawing the attention of everyone. This is the first quality of a true teacher. For example, a wise man never analyzes the height and width of the tree, colour and quality of the fruit, counting the leaves, twigs and branches before getting into discussion about mango, instead, he would eat that to come to the conclusion whether it is tastier or sour. The second quality must be always perfect in his attitude. Then only his words would have any value to the listeners. The third quality is to be away from selfish motive i.e. he should not crave for money, name and fame; instead his work must be purely out of love for mankind. That is said to be a teacher of godliness. By scrutinizing the real attitude of a better teacher, Vivekananda said, “He who is learned in the scriptures, sinless, unpolluted by lust, and is the greatest knower of Brahman is the real teacher” (Nanda 256).

In the words of Vivekananda, Religion could neither be bought from the shop nor from any person. It cannot be acquired by reading books but if he is ready for receiving it from the religious teacher, he could obtain it easily. Through pure love and veneration, the Lord reveals the truth of wonderful things connected with truth, goodness and beauty. One cannot see god without the help of a good teacher.

Here he would like to quote the commentary of Ramanuja’s Bakti yoga through Vedanta Sutras. Through his words it is clear that Bakti is born only through discrimination, controlling the passion, practising of
sacrificial work, purity, strength and suppression of excessive joy. While talking about discrimination, he took food for discussion. His views reveal that pure food gives man purification of thought and action-*Sattva* element.

The same word “food” is discussed differently by Shankara. In his ideas, whatever one gathered in for enjoyment is rightly called *ahara*’ or food. It must be pure without the defects of attachment, aversion and delusion.

Ramanuja’s explanation for purity comprises truthfulness, sincerity, helping others without expecting the reward, not hurting others by thought, word or deed, not coveting other’s possessions, avoiding vain thoughts and not brooding over injuries caused by others.

The views of Vivekananda on *bhakti* compel strength. One must be physically strong in order to sustain the shock of reaction resulting from the attempt in the process of maintaining *bakti* that is control of organs. Also the cheerful mind alone would find its way through a thousand difficulties. This is the way of learning to love god.

Out of four *Yogas, Bhakti yoga* is the most natural in renunciation. There is no violence. One need not give up anything to attain *bakti*. It is easy and smooth-flowing and natural. A man who has real love of god would not mind forms, rituals, books on gods, images, temples, churches, religion and sects, countries and nationalities. Such men alone have the right to talk of *universality* that is universal brotherhood or oneness.
At last while giving description of pure love, Vivekananda said that there were lots of difference between pure love and beggar’s love of god. It means that love should not be bargained. A person should not ask for boon or gifts from god. If he does so it is considered as beggar’s love. Another kind of love comes out of fear. It is said to be a mere degradation to worship god out of fear of punishment. One more kind of love is free from rivals. The next type of love is friendship. As a man forgets the miserable things caused to him, god also becomes a friend of man. At times god shows mercy to man by forgiving his sins. It is like sharing our inner feelings with our friends. God is viewed here as our playmate. The next is known as loving god as our child. There is one more love which is called the sweetheart relationship which is based on the highest manifestation of love in this world.

At last Vivekananda said that this world is like a lunatic asylum. It is filled with men whose desires vary from person to person. Some are mad after name or fame or worldly love or money or salvation. Out of which love towards god becomes eternally blessed.
Hinduism

Vivekananda considered religion as the core of Indian culture. He did not mean the external ceremonies but the internal ideals of Hindu religion. Hinduism comprises high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, low ideas of idolatry, skepticism of Buddhist and the incredulity of the Jains. Hindus believed that the Vedas are accumulated assets of spiritual laws like the law of gravitation. They hoped that every soul is located in the body and that death means shifting from body to body. This is transmigration of soul and karma. By the laws of affinity, the soul takes birth in a body which is the instrument. It will go on evolving or reverting back from birth to birth and death to death. One must revere the Almighty as the beloved one, dearer than everything in this and the next life. Vivekananda said,

We create God in our image, it is we who create Him to be our master, it is not God who makes us His servants. When we know that we are one with god, that we and He are friends, then come equality. (CWSV 7:29)

Vivekananda tries to explain what is equality and real freedom. There is no community in this world named as masters and servants. One must keep friendly relationship with god through sincere prayer. If so, there is equality felt by the people. In this secular state, people are to act accordingly. There are so many idols and images. Some figures or sculptures are essential to bring one’s concentration to make his mind to
be sound. At least a “dot” or “Om” will fulfill this necessity. So it is not
wrong in creating one’s own images in order to bring concentration to
cultivate his mind to be sound through meditation. By this one can get
real freedom physically and mentally.

Human brain is thick with false assumption of Vedas. If it is
unveiled, the real substance of it will be exposed to all. It will free us
from ignorance, sin, desire, selfishness and misery. In this material world,
everyone is rushing after fancy unconsciously. This is due to their
unawareness of the basic principles of life, that is treating everyone as
brothers and sisters. Also it is true that no one is free to think about the
truth and God. But it is through Vedas that one can realize God, saints
like Vivekananda are His true messengers. He was incarnated in this
world to demonstrate God who is within one’s soul. By this realization
people can be free from ignorance about god and religion. Swamiji’s
conversation with the church official has been documented. It said that
India could learn the art of ruling the country from England, agriculture
and science from America but no country could teach India religion. On
the contrary, she would teach the world Hinduism (Reevs 23).

A man must live in this world like a lotus leaf which grows in
water but is never moistened by it. So a man ought to live in this world by
keeping his heart to God and his hands to work. The Vedas teach us the
real meaning for freedom thus: people must be free from the clutches of
dishonesty and free from death and misery. Then only it is real freedom.
If one is pure in heart and stainless in action he can see god. This is the central conception of Hinduism. After attaining perfection in everything, a man leads a life of infinite bliss. The Hindus have associated the idea of holiness, purity, truth, omnipresence and similar such ideas with different images and forms. By this law of association, the material image calls up the mental idea. That is why the Hindu uses an external symbol when he worships. It helps to keep his mind fixed on the Being to whom he prays.

Vivekananda admits that the Hindus have their faults such as the painstaking ascetic practices and torment of their body. If the Hindu fanatic burned himself on the pyre, he would fail to light up the fire of inquisition. Vivekananda also emphasized the catholicity of Hinduism which accepts every religion. Vivekananda concludes by visualizing the universal religion which would become eternal like God whose Sun would shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike which would not be Brahmanic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan but the sum total of all these. It would be a religion which would have no place for persecution of intolerance in its policy whose whole force would be centered in aiding humanity to realize its own true and divine nature. This must be offered and the nations would follow alike. Swami said,

Religion gives you nothing new; it only tames off obstacles and lets you see your Self. Sickness is the first great obstacle; a healthy
body is the best instrument. Melancholy, Doubt, want of Perseverance, mistaken ideas are other obstacles. (CWSV 7:62)

It is an old saying that religion teaches people nothing except god and mysteries. Apart from that the real meaning for it is realizing the purpose of being born and living in this world. What is our duty and right to be carried out? If one finds out solutions to these queries he will be the real human being. The people must be free from obstacles such as sickness, dejection, doubt, lack of effort and mistaken ideas. It is reported that it was observed by Vivekananda from the Parliament of Religions that Hindu religion would be the mother of all religions and cultures (Dhashanandar 78)

“Shake off all ideas of relativity; shake off all superstitions; let caste and birth and devas and all” (CWSV 7:73). Any kind of relationship in this world is like diseased leaves on trees. It must be withered and renewed seasonally. Similarly the unwanted ideas must be erased off our minds to reach a pure kind of state. Superstition is like a plague. It must be eradicated totally. Otherwise it would stop our development of subconscious mind. The people should not indulge in casteism and any festivities. As a whole they must be free from mean bliss. “When man finds that all searches for happiness in matter is nonsense, the religion begins. All human knowledge is but a part of religion” (CMSV 7:73).

Happiness is like a water bubble or ripples on the face of water. It attracts many by various colours but vanishes quickly. Like that the
people, after temporary relief are like chatting and making merry with friends, laughing at others’ inability, making fun of others’ innocence, becoming strong over the weak. These are all leisure time activities. It entertains only the least characteristics not the wise. At last it leads to nullification. If one tries to overcome these glamorous monsters, there would be realization. This gives birth to religion which teaches us doctrine of life and stable gay.

**His Understanding of Buddhism**

The rise of Buddhism had put an end to the domination of pundits. On the other hand, it encouraged the tyranny of the rule of kings. Buddhist monks were free from all the worldly possessions. They neither cursed other’s faults nor used a magic wand to overpower the ruler of the kingdom. They were free from all the bondages of desire. These good principles have shaken the foundation of Gods and Goddesses. In the observations of Vivekananda, Buddhists stood tall amidst Brahman (god of birth) and Indiran (god of rain). There came to an end the rule of petty kings and their admirers. Instead his power was vested in the hands of a single ruler from one end of the country to the other. Due to Buddhistic influences, the ruler of the country enjoyed all freedom especially spiritual. The write-up entitled “Buddha in Swami Vivekananda’s Eyes” reported that during his discussion about Buddha with his guru, the Swami expressed that Buddha could not express in words what he had
realized by his *tapasya*. So people said that he was an atheist (Sandarshananda 257-261)

Christopher Isherwood who captured the ideals of Vivekananda said that as Buddhists’ belief faded away, there rose bureaucrats whose scale of justice resulted in the fragments of Indian administration. These weaknesses strengthened the Pundits’ occupancy that backup the government at ease. Starting from *Vedic* period unto Buddhist revolutionary days, there came an end to the revolt between kings and pundits. On the other hand, they both became friends but they had failed in their valour and spiritual illumination. They together turned their attention towards the destruction of Buddhism. They were tyrannical and also indulged in many evil deeds. This attracted the attention of flatterers and the country was easily abducted by Musalmans of the neighbouring countries.

The observations of Tapasyananda stated that the revolt between Buddhist and the Samanas totally rooted out the power of Brahminism. In order to regain their vitality, once again, they had tried to unite their power with uncivilians from Mid-Asia. Thus they had induced many evil doings within the country. This resulted in losing their education, bravery and their principles. Thus the country had been changed into the land of terrific and mysterious activities of the inhabitants. Because of this worst custom, *Brahmanas* became very weak and were easily captured by the Islams of the West. Their life became miserable.
Buddhism is one of the various sects which was founded by a great man called Gautama Buddha who became disgusted with the eternal metaphysical discussions of his days and the rituals especially with the caste system. He was also against the tremendous priestcraft. He preached a religion in which there was no motive power and was perfectly agnostic about metaphysics or theories about God. Bereft of all motive power, he did not want to go to heaven, did not even want money. He gave up his throne and went about begging for his bread in the streets of India, preaching for the good of men and animals with a heart as wide as the ocean. He was the only man who was ever ready to give up his life for animals and to protect them from being offered as sacrifice to God. He was the one who proved that through the power of work also, one can attain the highest spirituality. Vivekananda said that he reached the same state of perfection to which others come by Bhakti- love of God, Karma or Gnana.

Hinduism and Buddhism

In his discourses in the West, Vivekananda tried to ingress the alien minds with the messages of Lord Buddha. This showed his great personal interest in Buddha. He recognized that the origin, development and culmination of Buddhism extended over several years of India’s history. It is true that every one of Buddha’s teachings is founded in the
Vedanta. Buddha was one of those monks who wanted to bring out the truths hidden in those books and in the forest monasteries.

Then he pointed out that it was quite probable that during the rise of Buddhism in India, the Hindus adopted this custom and also erected memorials resembling their *Skambha* which was the symbol of Eternal Brahman. At the Parliament of Religions, Vivekananda declared that Hinduism cannot live without Buddhism, or Buddhism without Hinduism. In his opinion, both these religions are inter-dependent.

**Islam**

“Mohammed was the prophet of equality, of the brotherhood of man, the brotherhood of all Mussalmans” (CWSV 4:133). Vivekananda envisaged that in the reign of Mohammedans, the ruler himself would be the God-father of the subjects. He would be the religious Guru. He wished to become the autocrat of the world. On one hand, the rulers were not against the habits and customs of Christians or Jews. On the other hand, they were dead against the habit of idol worship observed by Hindus. They condemned death as punishment. Totally they banished the Brahmins. Thus the emperors like Mauryas and Guptas regained their powers massively. During this period, there was a great slash for Samanas and Buddhists. It is very clear that the revolt was not between ruler and the Brahmanas but between the rulers of two great kingdoms. At the end of this period, because of Sikhs and Maratas, Hindus gained a little
elevation. That too, Brahmanas never gained a larger place of freedom. In order to put on the images, symbols of Brahmans, Sikhs made those brahmanas to wear their symbols to represent Hinduism.

At last India was caught in the clutches of the British. Here came an end to the throne of Mohammedans. Due to the resources of the country, most of the Hindu traders had earned a lot through trade and commerce. With their monetary support, the Hindus, the aborigines of India made the Mohammedans as their puppets. Not only this, with their sharp knowledge and economy, they even enslaved some of the rulers of the kingdoms.

**Ideals of Christianity**

In Vivekananda’s opinion, Christ is the messenger of God. Before giving descriptions of Him, he just wanted to show the similarity of human life in the society and the movement of waves in the ocean. The continuous ebb and flow of waves reflect the happiness and misery of human life. This is the nature of the universe. As the same water rising from the low to make a bigger wave, the liberal ideals would marshal ahead to sink down and to digest in order to ruminate over the past.

The central figure of this message is a great soul, the messenger. From history, the people came to know that the same messenger once had a great fall. Through his vision, he found that the greatness would occupy the whole space of this world. From Him, every individual has received
only a little energy. Day after day, the greatest energy got itself doubled with new vigour. In his opinion the life of Christ is the mere replica of the past. Similarly each individual has received his manners through surroundings or through education or through his own reincarnation. They are all mere reflections of the past. Human beings are just mere wavelets in the eternal current of events moving forward further and further on and incapable of rest. In the ocean of affairs, each individual would be a little bubble who when unable to tolerate the heavy current of fate would stretch his arms for the future. The Christ said that a man on this earth could never see God but it would be possible for him to see God in the form of his own son like the vibration of light. God is present everywhere in this Universe. But it is difficult for one to see Him until He is reflected by the giant lamps of the earth. Here lamps are none other than prophets, the man-gods and the Incarnations.

Vivekananda indirectly admitted that Christ is the highest of all and whose ideals could not be compared with the ideal of the formed God. As long as one is living in the world of men, his world, religion and God all are in the form of human. Ages together these Incarnations of God have been worshipped all over the world. Christ was born at the time Jews were in the state of fall between two waves. It is explained as a state of stagnation that is state of suffering. He was followed by the gigantic brain of Jesus of Nazrath.
The habit of worshipping forms, giving attention to details of religion and rituals might be laughed at. Sometimes fanatics would be seemed to be stronger than the liberal man. Thus fanatic has the greatest virtue that conserves more energy. Similar to individuals, the race gathered its energy and will be conserved. The whole race might be forced to concentrate and focus its energies upon Jerusalem and Judaism. The same compressed energy is expressed in the rise of Christianity. In Vivekananda’s views Jesus of Nazareth himself was an oriental of Orientals. It is reported that for Christian students, his teaching started with the Christian scriptures and sprinkled some concepts from the “Narada Bakti Sutra.” In the discussion of love of god, he covered specifically the Gospel of John, the Bhagavad Gita, about Sri Ramakrishna and the Divine mother. He had also taught the commentaries of Shankaracharya, Ramanuja and the Brahma Sutra including his views (Chaudhari 167-171)

In his observations, Vivekananda could smell that the West had the habit of finding the greatness of the preacher whose talk touched the core of the listener’s mind. He condemned the habit of giving details through texts. It gave misconceptions about the life of the Christ, a great politician, a military general and a patriotic Jew. Instead, he expected the best teachers to express his own life, as an example for others. He pinpointed people’s wish towards property, money, wealth and fondness for “me.” This would result only in miseries. He wished to call Jesus the
“Teacher of Humanity”, who does not have any desires to satisfy his physical and mental hunger and anxiety. He must be accepted as a God down from the heaven that would be considered as brother of animals whose messages made him as good preacher on all sorts of things. It is only a soul which is free from all the relationships in this world. His work is to make others realize one’s own spiritual nature. According to Vivekananda, superstition means thinking oneself as poor or sinner. Vivekananda condemned this attitude as worst, because all the living creatures under the sun are considered as sons of God himself. While scrutinizing the words of Jesus of Nazreth, Vivekananda said that until all the miseries are vanished from this world, each one must try to get hold of the effulgent light of God and also realize his spiritual nature. He advises his listeners not to go deep into the history of New Testament. Instead, it is better one must imitate the real existence of God’s life. A Christian’s praiseworthy words on the life style of Swamiji is documented thus: Swamiji had dedicated everything for “truth” (Brown 27).

Men observe God in three different ways. An uneducated man who has undeveloped intellect would think god is seated comfortably high above and giving judgements to the sinners. In their eyes, He is like a fire and terror. To make it clear, Vivekananda has given an example of Sun, when at a distance, it seems to be a point. By moving towards it, if it is photographed, its appearance varies from each angle but it is the same Sun. Thus all forms of religion are just different stages of that immortal
state of Light which is God Himself who is a punisher of the bad and a rewarder of the good.

If a man attains spirituality, he sees God as Omnipresent. His presence could be seen everywhere. He would be considered Soul of all Souls. As a fully developed man, one could see God. They found at last that they and God were one. The above said three stages of man’s intellectual developments are the teachings found in the New Testament.

While talking about Salvation, he said apart from purity, a man is not at all in need of acquiring language or reading books to know the religion. He tried to give explanations for purity by stressing that it must directly come from God and also through the language of the Bible or in the language of the Koran. These two sacred things might be impure by covering with dirt and dust only through the attitudes of the people’s evil deeds. It is one’s duty to clean these impurities to see the spirit glowing inside. Here Vivekananda would give reference to Jesus whose advice to his inquisitor conveyed that the best way to attain salvation was to give away all the possessions to the poor in order to become free from bonds. As per Vivekananda’s observations, it is very clear that the above said utterances were the mantra for all the prophets in this world. This would be the only principle that all the saints had preached before in the world. That is called perfect unselfishness. Vivekananda quoted from the Bible, “When a man is struck on the right cheek, he turns the left also. If
someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them” (Luke 6:29).

There is a possibility of getting this ideal perfected in man either the next day or after years together. But one must try his best to achieve it. Thus arises an ideal man who might be considered as God Himself. Vivekananda pointed every one of the listeners and said that each one of them would be a prophet who was expected to bear the burden of this world on their shoulders. He also added that whatever might be their caste, creed or colour, they would be treated as Godlike human beings who have dedicated their lives to humanity. They must be respected by everybody and Vivekananda’s salutation automatically reaches them.

**Secularist**

After realizing God both with form and without form, he told his master Ramakrishna that he wished to remain continually absorbed in the super conscious state for three or four days at a time, coming out of it only once in a while to eat a little food in order to keep his body alive. But his master advised him that not only he should taste the bliss of God for himself, but also share it with others. Therefore the master taught him the highest spiritual ideal that is to realize God and live in the service of humankind. At the prize distribution function of youthday, the lecture on Vivekananda said that “if a person does not have belief in himself but believing thousands of Gods would called an atheist. Excepting
Vivekananda swamiji, none could give sermon to the world exactly or clearly” (Maniam 15).

Amidst modern sannyasins, he is entirely different from the others in his life-style. For him food is only for survival, dress is to protect him from the sun and extreme cold and possessions must serve for utter necessity. His belongings were just a saffron cloth, a peg and a kamandalu. He took sky as his shelter and courage as his possession. He never called forth spectators or listeners but they themselves found out his arrival and assembled to heed his thought provoking speeches. His secular ideas expected the country to build temples with no idols or images. Instead they must be erected with a single symbol “Om.” There anybody could be giving lectures about his own religious thought but without affecting other religious beliefs or to quarrel with other sects. For this purpose, he planned to give training to a cluster of disciples in order to take this idea to every door. But it was not so successful as he expected.

The above discussions state that Vivekananda is a true Secularist. To his eyes all women appeared as his own mother. It is a report on scientist Sathyendranath Bose’s praiseworthy words that if one really wanted to pay homage to swamiji, he must first accept his greatest principle in order to render selfless service (Neelakandan 23)
Visit to America

Before the entry of Vivekananda on the American soil, the atmosphere had a slight touch of Indian Vedantism and Philosophy, because of the efforts taken by the scholars Emerson, Thoreau and Walt Whitman. In his Journal, Emerson made references to Hindu religious texts. Thus the spiritual manifestations had fermented and worked in the West for half a century to receive Vivekananda who had the power of recognizing the virtues and the real energy of Anglo-Saxon America. He wished to work for a loyal exchange that is to take to India the money and goods earned by western civilization and to give to the west the spiritual treasures of India. One of the western admirers reported, “swamiji’s public work i.e. religious and spiritual lectures in America really began on 30 December 1894. His first lecture starting from Brooklyn” (Waldo).

He was so much attracted by the women of intellectual attainment and their nobility, because of their freedom. Here he would compare the freedom of them with the aloofness of Indian women. His mind was also drowned and disturbed by the sufferings of his dead sister. This made him work for emancipation of women throughout the world. That is freedom through the spirit, the ways of man to attain god’s feet and the possession of the most destitute of Indians. He tries to soften the vigorous attitude of European Christianity in the highly developed America. Therefore he indulged in sowing the seeds of Vedanta and tried to nurture them through Ramakrishna’s love of humanity. He had preached the words of
Ramakrishna to the selected parts of American public on account of their logical reasoning. At Detroit, he met all his western disciples such as Sister Nivedita-Ms. Margaret Noble and Sister Christine-Ms. Greenstidel.

At New York in order to avoid the monopolized group of rich friends, he decided to form a group of disciples to whom he started a free course on *Upanishads*. He gave his disciples the exercise of *Raja-yoga* and *Jnana Yoga* for aiming at concentration through the control of vital energies and intellect in order to unite their spirit with the Absolute Reality. The Americans whose aim was to attain the riches and health would be kingdom of power. But it did not cause any impact on his religious campaign. The reporter in The New York Times stated, “the truth hidden under swamiji’s utterances that his prescription for life was simple and perfectly America: work and worship” (Bardach).

At Thousand Island Park, he taught them the ways of meditation by reading from the Gospel according to St.John. Besides, he explained the sacred books of India in order to awaken the souls of Yankees. The themes of his interviews comprise liberty, courage, chastity and the sin of depreciation. He spoke before Metaphysical Society of Harford, Ethical Society of Brooklyn and students and professors of philosophy at Harvard. He never moved away from his motto of tolerance and religious universalism. He wished to get the help of Indian disciples in the translation of Hindu thought into European languages in order to make a religion out of dry philosophy, complicated Mythology and mind-blowing
psychology. Vivekananda expected that this would definitely enhance the highest mind through simple and easy method of preaching the above said ideas.

According to Vivekananda, religion would see progress day-by-day and its universal ideal must be in motion in order to fix the constant union of the East and the West. One of the major works of Vedanta Society was to follow the interchange of men and ideas so that they must get themselves indulged in total humanity.

After he had become weary of fame, Vivekananda announced that he would hold classes free of charge. The contents of the lessons were ancient teachings of India, its philosophy and on universal tolerance. It happened in the year 1895 and lasted about five months. Visitors flocked to his place and learnt about Religion. In order to avoid unhealthy food, he turned to be a vegetarian. His general diet was bean soup, barley and rice. He gave training to selected followers to quiet the mind in the silence of meditation. All the visitors were fully satisfied and enjoyed an atmosphere of benediction, of peace, of power and of luminosity. Vivekananda’s New York classes dealt mostly with Raja-Yoga and Gnana-Yoga. Through Raja-Yoga, students were taught the path of practical spirituality that is to learn to acquire inner control of the senses. He taught them that meditation was the key to spirituality. They learnt that religion was the practice and realization and not a question of belief. He advised his students to lead pure lives and to eat simple food in order
to get sound mind and physique. Besides his lectures to the rich, he accepted the invitation for public lecture in New York under the auspices of Mrs. Ole Bull. Many Christian clergymen greatly admired his power of the conscious over spirituality. It was his desire to initiate some disciples as Sannyasins in order to carry on his American work in his absence. He attempted to break down religious sectarianism and superstition in order to place before men the truths of *Advaita Vedanta*. He gave more importance to truth which underlined the highest spiritual realization of all religions. Here he would like to repeat his master’s words that the spell of names such as Hindu, Christian, etc. acts as great obstacle to all brotherly feelings between man and man. Even in the foreign land, every morning he called forth his students to listen to some special subjects such as *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Upanishads* or the *Vedanta-Sutra* which was his daily routine in India. Besides Shankara’s monistic commentary, he pointed out either pure dualism or qualified non-dualism taught by Ramanuja, known as Vishistadvaita.

His days at Thousand Island Park were remarkable for his freest moments of his life-time. He did preach some of the Christian scriptures. Those talks were collected under the title “Inspired Talks”.

His second visit to America was in the year 1899. He met one of his brother disciples namely Turiyananda. It was he who gave satisfactory information to him about the progress of American work. Abhedananda, another dedicated disciple began regular classes at Vedanta Society.
Rooms. From there he used to write letters to Sister Christine about his health condition. At New Jersey, Turiyananda started his work of teaching children in the home. Apart from this Vivekananda would conduct weekend classes for the same. He used to tell stories and readings from the *Gitopadesha* and books of Indian Wisdom. At that time *Vedanta* had taken its root firmly. Its impact was seen on almost every earnest discussion in intellectual and religious circles. Many of the college students inspired by his name or his books, visited Vivekananda who was overflowing with love and goodwill towards them. His quick answers to the questions were the most effective methods of handling spiritual and philosophical difficulties. Some of the unsettling questioners were recorded by Brahmachari Gurudas and were published through ‘Prabuddha Bharata’. During one of the question hours, he gave explanations for his positive way of approaching everything as due to his learning virtues through *Sin*. Nearly 600 people attended Vivekananda’s lecture on “The Vedanta Philosophy”, “Applied Psychology” and “New Thought.” The members who attended the lecture on “Truth” were won over by the Vivekananda’s simplicity, intellect and his high towering spirituality. The list of his lectures includes “The Mind and its Powers”, “Christ’s Message to the World”, “Theory of Concentration”, “Practice of Concentration”, “Spiritual Breathing” and “Reincarnation.” The essay entitled ‘Swamiji’s impact on American Spirituality’ reported,”not only must you have spiritual ideas but they must come to you according to
your own method. They must speak your own language, the language of your soul and then alone they will satisfy you” (Brahmaprana 93).

Many teachers of Metaphysics and fake teachers started condemning the true teachings of Vivekananda on Metaphysics. He also gave lectures on the secret of success and about the history of India and her people. Apart from giving lectures at famous halls with huge gathering, he had conducted classes for a number of interested students on hill-top. He was not at all moved by sight-seeing there. The description for his unwillingness to see those things was that man could walk thousand miles to see a human being but need not spend even ten steps to enjoy a natural scene. He specified that punishing the child or making them afraid would give no good results in their lifetime. He laid great emphasis on Practical *Vedanta* and *Yoga*. The best of his key teachings was to preach the way to hold oneself. During this period, *Vedanta* Societies were established in Los Angels and Pasadena. It helped the current wave of benefit between India and America. That is spiritual help flowing of East and West. And on the other side, financial help extended from the West to the East. The report of Swamiji’s second visit to New York enlightened the country through his strong activities of Ramakrishna Mission especially in San Francisco and in North America. It shows his interest in spreading secular religion throughout the world. He did a comparative study between ancient Indian theories and contemporary science” (Krishnaswamy 3)
His second trip to America was a successful one. Wherever he went either on tour or for giving lectures, he would be surrounded by a host of disciples. The themes were rules of life and death and about salvation with the inclusion of Indian customs, manners, ideals, arts and science. It created a sensation among the church-going people at Oakland. His talk on India was rich with illustrations of high moral and spiritual ideals. He was par excellent in story telling which his audience never tired of listening. The way he narrated stories enthralled the audience and made spell bound.

His days at San Francisco ran enthusiastically with the company of Mrs.Hansbrough. It was a rented home where Vivekananda and his disciples were put up and was comfortable for him to conduct classes on Buddha, Christ and Mohammed. Repeatedly he stressed the necessity of monistic *Vedanta* in the present world. In the course of his lecture, Vivekananda had the power to unveil the orthodox thinking and also it shattered the blind belief trying to liberate the soul. Many of both the genders from San Francisco and Oakland became his sincere followers. They have attended all the lectures of Vivekananda delivered across the world. Particularly Mr.Frank Rhodehamel who later gave his writings published in 1961 under the title *Reminiscences of Vivekananda*. He was hard working at Alamedu. Thus he had delivered hundreds of lectures in and around California. It was the wonderful work of young woman
named Ida Ansell who transcribed most of his lectures which helped in the publication of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*.

His friends and disciples in California remained life-long followers of his teachings. From the days of his participation in the Parliament of Religions until his second visit to the United States the period covered nearly thirty-nine months. His messages sowed the seeds in the mind of all. He had established *Vedanta* Societies on both coasts. At last in 1900, he started his return journey to India.

**Visit to England**

The professor with whom Vivekananda stayed in Trivandrum in 1892 reported that it was his fourth and last lecture on the “Future of India” (Iyer 71). It is understood that thereafter his concentration was on the West.

Vivekananda’s days at London were with Saradananda and Ms. Muller. Very soon the fame of his personality and his inspiring words spread far and wide. His talks reflected the philosophies of India and their connection to modern life along with various forms of *Yoga*. A series of class lectures dealt with the history of the Aryan race and its religious development and influence. Swami Vivekananda gave lectures on all the *Yogas* which were recorded by Mr. Goodwin. At Sesame Club, he delivered a lecture on “Education” organized by women. The purpose of it was not only to point Indian systems of education but also not to cram it
with the present system. The audiences were mostly school masters and mistresses and tutors. For them it was a novel experience to listen to Vivekananda with Hindu love and faith supported by an ancient civilization and culture. They also understood that it was good to use the mother tongue to explain difficult subjects. His campaign proved that Vivekananda was well-versed also in history and political economy. Besides English Clubs, societies and drawing-rooms stretched their arms to receive him. Through London Hindu Association, he gave comfort to all the Indian settlers there by giving discourse on the Hindus and their needs. The speech mainly focused on the way of the dress, caste restrictions and the position of Hindu women. His meeting with the Orientalist, Prof. Max Muller of Oxford University was an unforgettable moment in London. Max Muller was so much induced by Keshab Chandra Sen, the great Brahma leader and also by the life and teachings of Ramakrishna. Sturdy and Vivekananda were introduced to many colleges in Oxford and the Bodleian Library by him. He was a Vedantist of Vedantists.

The success in London work made Vivekananda feel that it was essential for a sannyasin to stay there. This resulted in calling forth Abhedananda to stay there. Vivekananda’s spiritual mood was at its highest during his stay there. Though Vivekananda suffered from a heavy chest pain, he never forgot his aim of shaping the society. In the course of his discussions with Sturdy, Vivekananda conveyed his opinion that
Vedanta was the basic philosophy of all religions. Thus it was called the Universal Religion. It must be converted into a treasure. Lectures in London were very popular when compared with others on the alien soil. Once, when he was delivering a lecture on Raja-Yoga, a drunkard disturbed his talk with unexpected shouting. It went on nearly for half an hour. During which the drunkard called a monk who attained high spiritual state as a thief and burglar. He also found fault with the attitude of Buddha. Then he continued to comment on Bengalis and the harshness of the British. At the end of Vivekananda’s speech, the audience hailed him by saying that he was a Saint who taught them a grand lesson on forbearance.

With the help of Sturdy, Vivekananda could get hold of a few strong and intelligent men in England to form a society. It was in the year 1896 that he started giving his public lectures there. The content of it was about divine nature and its connection in everyday’s life. He said that the world was imprisoned under superstitious belief. In his opinion, all the miseries were caused by ignorance of the commoners. To brighten up the welfare of the society, Vivekananda would expect the best people to sacrifice their life for others to come up. He expected nearly hundreds of Buddha the wise incarnation with eternal love and pity and that might happen in this world. At the concluding session of the lecture, his utterance was documented by sister Christian which said that the world was in want of character that is Religion. If it failed, religion would be a
lifeless mockery. Selfless love was the only character which was expected by Vivekananda to shape this world. Many were caught up in the freshness of thought sent forth by him. Through his preaching, he earned the friendship of Ms. Muller, Mr. Sturdy and Ms. Margaret Noble. They later turned to be his disciples and were ready to sacrifice everything for him.

On another occasion, Vivekananda got a chance to meet Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, students of religion. They were not satisfied with the forms and theological dogmas which were preached under the name of religion. They came to listen to the exposition of a new religion. They were so much captivated by the personality of Vivekananda and by his explanation of Advaita Philosophy. It is true that Vivekananda held his disciples, Ms. Noble and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier as the finest flowers of his work in England. Whatever amount he had collected through lectures in England were sent to his disciples in India. This shows his non-attachment to the material world.

With the company of the above mentioned intimate friends, Vivekananda made a trip to Switzerland, though there were no luxurious transport facilities at that time. Somehow they managed to reach the destination with the help of mule, funicular, dandies and horse-drawn stage coaches. From there, they went on a tour to old cities of Germany and reached London through Amsterdam. Their tour covered almost nearly nine weeks. His summer days at Geneva were the most exciting
one because he took a balloon ride until sunset. Wherever he went either to cross snow-falling or to meet the peasantry, he was reminded of India and their people. This was the place where he had the intention of starting Advaita Ashrama at the Himalayas. He spent the most luminous spiritual moments at the lap of little Swiss village kept away from all worldly concerns. While taking up morning walk, he had the habit of reciting and translating passages from the Upanishads. Thus he would create an Indian atmosphere in the Alps.

The three companions visited the greatest and oldest German Universities at the city of Heidelberg. He was so much impressed by the great culture of the Germans and the general character of the curriculum. On their return journey to London, they were accompanied by Prof. Deusse, the philosopher from whom Vivekananda could listen to talks about the atmosphere of Indian philosophy. He was well versed in giving description from the position of a scholar unto the street boys.

In the year 1896, Vivekananda had once again footed the English shores. With full enthusiasm, once again he started delivering lectures. In that summer season, he had rented a large room which could accommodate nearly 200 people and had facilities for a small library. Each and every step was shadowed by Sturdy. In order to carry on his spiritual work, he offered training to people to carry on Vivekananda’s work after his return to India. He was very much engaged by discussing Vedanta metaphysics with Deussen and wrote letters to Mrs.Bull and
Max Muller. He devoted much time to the exposition of the philosophical portions of the *Vedanta* which are called *Gnana-Yoga*. Most of the lectures were centered on Maya and Freedom. It was followed by a series of lectures on God and Realization. While delivering lectures on *Practical Vedanta*, Vivekananda was seen with full of the luminous theme of *Advaita*.

To everybody’s surprise, all his lectures were delivered without any prior preparation or reference to articles or notes. The content of his lectures conveyed the idea that *Vedanta* was a combination of science and religion. Many of the greatest personalities in England were moved by his teachings. Through his writings to Mrs. Bull, it is very clear that speeches of Vivekananda were respected by the most orthodox people. Several times, he got a chance to attend sermons at the Anglican Church whose characteristics of advanced religious thoughts enlightened him. He would like to leave his identity through black and white on the *Vedanta* Philosophy. Before leaving the West, he was satisfied with the demand for his book *Raja-Yoga*. Through letters he could instruct his Indian disciples in America as well as in his home country.

Besides giving directions to run the Math, he devised some rules for running it smoothly. They are for study, propaganda and Religious practice. The letter carried with it the standing order of Vivekananda to hold strictly the instructions and serve with necessary funds. Also he expected a Women Math to be set up in India and affairs of it must
strictly be carried on by Indians. Also he objected to the interference of
men disciples and said that the expenses would be borne by him. His
letters are the evidences for his sincere love of India though busily
engaged in great work in England. Along with instructions for the
promotion of work in India, he also gave them advice on how to free
oneself from worldly bondages with full enthusiasm to spread new light
all over India. Through *Brahmavadin*, Vivekananda broadcast his ideas of
Hinduism to Indian minds. Under his direction, Prabuddha Bharata was
also launched at Chennai. It was exclusively for the messages of religion
and philosophy. By assuring them of the success of the magazine, he
advised them to start dailies in vernacular languages such as Tamil,
Telugu, Kannada, etc.

While listening to the speeches of Abhedananda in England, he
was delighted to see in him spiritual fervour and rhetoric beauty. Through
newspapers and letters, he got a chance to read about the successful work
of Saradananda in America whose work gave satisfaction to most of the
students’ community. In the absence of him in Cambridge, the weekly
classes were conducted by Sarah Ellen with the encouraging letters of
Vivekananda. In one of his letters, he poured out his intention for coming
home to make permanent monastery on a small scale. All the newspapers
in London flashed headlines and reports of the wide-spread famine in
India. At the sight of it Vivekananda had sent the money he had for
immediate relief. For the same purpose he took a handsome amount from a London lady.

To everybody’s surprise, Vivekananda started his journey towards India by taking a short route through Naples and Sri Lanka. He had the intention of setting up centres in Calcutta and Chennai and one at Himalayas which would be founded by the Sevier family. The aim of his mission was not at all confined to India, America and England but also extended and touched a global scale. He was fully satisfied with the work of his disciples in the East and the West. On his way back, he intended to deliver lectures in Japan and China. The editor of Tribune said, “during his visit to Japan, Swamiji had admired the patriotism of the nation and said that no sacrifice is too great for maintaining the honour and integrity of the country” (Gupta 16). Vivekananda’s serious discussions with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier showed that his further plans would be his desire to deliver his message to his motherland. In his return journey, he was accompanied by his devoted disciples Goodwin and Ms.Muller and Ms.Bell. Besides making ideal wives and mothers, Brahmacharinis must also looking after the betterment of women in India especially for Hindu girls. He had an idea of bringing Ms.Margaret Noble to India to maintain this department. On the whole he felt so much happy at the successful campaign in the West and also to make his dream a reality --- that is rejuvenation of his motherland.
As a firm *Advaitin*, his preaching on *Advaita Vedanta* was comprehensive for his listeners who were in need of various paths to quench their spiritual thirst. It is documented that many of the Londoners accepted Vivekananda for his practical side more than his eloquence and richness. Compared with the work in America, Vivekananda was more satisfied with his work in England. He was so much attracted by their strength and brevity and their readiness to accept the worldly truth. They had immense practicality and immense vitality of their race. In Vivekanand’s opinion, Londoners were very friendly and they dedicated their service to those who came to mingle with them in their country. Thus he felt that his visit to England was a successful one. Newspaper reporters said that Vivekananda had made a remarkable influence everywhere in England. He had opened the eyes of a great many and broadened their hearts. It created a deep impression about the truth of Hindu scriptures. Apart from this, it established a golden relation between England and India. To his surprise, Vivekananda’s doctrines released many of the Christians from their religious bondage. The ochre robe worn by Bepin Chandra Pal, a publicist was mistakenly identified as Vivekananda in such a way that Londoners were roused by the preaching of him. Many educated Englishmen had the curiosity to listen to any of the religious or spiritual truths from the Indian.
Philosophical Literature

Vivekananda’s method focused on harmony, oneness, morality, the law of *Karma* and liberation. He introduced new methods for solving the problems of society through his philosophy of religion, ethics and metaphysics.

The idea of oneness is the foundation on which every religion is built up. Its goal is also the same but the ways adopted by each religion are varied in many aspects. It is the idea of getting freedom. Before achieving it, every hurdle must be crossed with great difficulties. Here hurdles are such as the stages of man starting from childhood unto old age. At each stage, in order to identify himself, man undergoes a lot of miseries. For example as a school boy, his time is imprisoned inside the school within four walls. Besides learning, he has to maintain discipline also. He may be disturbed by external forces such as desire to go home, play with others, to get good sleep and rest. After reaching home also, the bundles of home work baffle him. He does not have time to relax in order to think about divinity. He is in need of a good guide to realize his divinity within himself.

As a grown-up man, he has to look after his parents side-by-side, he has to earn his livelihood. He does not have leisure time. On the whole he is attracted to and drowned in the material world. There will be no time for him to think about God or Religion. After some time, as a family man, he totally forgets his responsibility in the society. His possessiveness
starts at this period. He feels jealous of other’s luxury. By this way, it is difficult for a house-holder to think of God or Religion.

At old age, the same man after finishing his family responsibilities wants to relax. This is the turning point in his life time. He tries to spare his time to worship God. This is the stage where he analyses the necessity of religion which gives solace to him. But Vivekananda said that there were no differences among religions. There is only one God whose existence could be felt but He could not be seen. Swahananda documented Vivekananda’s concept of service. As the wind and the Sun never show any difference between people, Religion gives the same effect to all. The article reported that on noticing the condition of the society which is addicted either to sensual pleasures or wealth and power, Swamiji wanted his monastic brothers to educate the masses of India in secular and spiritual matters. Otherwise when people reached their middle age, they would be disillusioned and disappointed with so-called pleasures (Gautamananda 7-16)

Vivekananda pointed out that almost every religion has the same virtues such as brotherhood, friendship, helping at the time of necessity and equality. This is said to be Universality. The above said virtues do not depend upon any power such as supernatural beings, the Universal spirit. Vivekananda had the answer for the question whether religion could be independent of the absolute. He said that God was not at all considered as external being because it must be felt within oneself. His idea of religion
was different from those of the others. He said that if a man saw God in
others, he would be a religious person. “I shall call you religious from the
day you begin to see god in men and women… (CWSV 2:326).

From the above, it is very clear that the principles of ethics are
proved by reason and that the God of religion is identified through Self-
Realization. So both ethics and religion become Self-governing and do
not depend on other things like Supernatural Elements.

In the opinion of Vivekananda, “I” and “You” are not two separate
beings. They are one like two sides of the same coin. By thinking so, one
could leave aside “Selfishness” and try to acquire “Selflessness.”
Vivekananda stressed the need for uniting body and mind as one.

While talking about equality, he asked an individual to give respect
to another individual. This also indicates oneness or the unity among
individuals. If one finds a lack of potentiality in another man, he would
attempt to help him. This is called positive duty taught by Vivekananda.
Apart from the unity of human beings, he initiated unity between man and
animal. Before his eyes, every living creature is the same in this world.

The explanation given by Vivekananda for the unity of the path of
action that is doing the work and need not expect any reward, the path of
knowledge means realizing the divinity within oneself and the path of
devotion or love explains through love one can realise God. Thus all the
three Yogas namely, Karma-yoga, Gnana-yoga and Bakti-yoga are
considered as one. The motive of all the yogas is to reach the lotus feet of
God. But the ways are different. Here he would quote examples of Christ or Buddha. “There is not really so much difference between knowledge (Jnana) and love (Bakti) as people sometimes imagine… In the end they converge and meet at the same point” (CWSV 3:32).

Vivekananda is not only applying the concept of unity found in the *Advaita Vedanta*. He has solved many problems which no one has solved before. He has applied a new method that is the concept of unity to solve the problems of morality and the law of *Karma* in Indian philosophy. It would be welcomed by all types of philosophical systems of the world.

As far as Vivekananda is concerned, the concept of morality comprises the traditional virtues such as love, compassion, brotherhood and justice. The first morality is “love” which is said to be the way to reach God. Out of love one can understand all the secrets of the Universe. One can see God in others if he never thinks of caste or creed or race or anything. The Almighty will be pleased to see such men who are willing to serve the poor and the people ailing with diseases. In his heart he could see God in the form of a beggar waiting at the door steps of temples. When the same man stops showing his love towards others, he could be identified as a spiritually lifeless being. Out of love one could unite himself with others. It is said to be the best of all virtues. It promotes to do positive work which would alleviate the suffering of others.

At present, people prefer to live in their own house to show their superiority to others in the society. Vivekananda says that a man who is
not willing to build houses for others is not at all considered a human being. He does not have the right to call himself as the owner of it. It is a man’s duty to build shelter for the poor. The door of it must be always open to others especially for the poor and the suffering. Then he will be called a good householder. If so, he will be the lover of God. Similarly, the purpose of cooking food is only for other’s hunger and the leftover may be relished by the person who is starving. It is like the duty of a host to treat his guest.

While talking about the duties, he did emphasise the duty towards animals. His words are, “one portion of the food cooked in household belongs to the animals also … they should be fed and taken care of” (CWSV 4:10).

It is the duty of every individual to nurture this society to bring peace. Each one must understand that the entire world has their blood relatives.

The second aspect is “unselfishness.” In this material world people are jealous of others with regard to basic necessities. Their superiority complex suppresses the inbuilt morality in man. According to Vivekananda, selfish attitudes are, one who takes possession of something that is wife, child, house, and etc. without the knowledge of his own. It is a wise saying that not even the spirit of our own belongs to us. Each one of us in this world might be possessed by God. People are here in this world by the Will of God. It must be kept in mind and we must act
accordingly. They must be aware that mere thinking of owning something would be a selfish attitude. Whether one can do good to others or not, is not at all a matter but mere thinking of doing good and desiring to do good to others is considered as moral values. Whatever may be our attitude that is charity, giving food, dress and shelter to the needy or showing sympathy towards others or all the actions which end in the welfare of the society are the necessary things to make oneself keep away from self-possession.

The third aspect of morality is the “realization of divinity.” This concept is already explained under the heading “Self-Realization.”

The fourth aspect of morality is “freedom.” One could enjoy real freedom when he is free from the clutches of desires. If he does his deeds through selfishness, his action itself makes him a slave, because all selfish works are attached with great expectations. Thus it ends in slavery. So it is not advisable to do slaves work. The way to escape this bondage is to remove “I” and “Mine” from our minds, because it puts a chain around us. If it is an unselfish attitude, then he will be enjoying his real freedom.

From the above discussions it follows that Vivekananda’s moral actions are categorized as unity, unselfishness, divinity and freedom. If one opens his mind and soul towards these qualities, he will be placed amidst learned personalities like Vivekananda. He is a man of confined to words but performs meaningful deeds for the welfare of others. This makes others to stand before him with awe and respect.
Vivekananda’s *Karma yoga* expressed freedom from bondage. It said that man can reach his goal by different paths. Each blends into the other. These divisions are made in accordance with the type that might be seen in man. At the end, all these paths converge and become one. All religions and all methods of work and worship lead us one and the same goal.

Everything perceived around one way or other is struggling towards freedom. The freedom which the saint searches varies from that which the robber seeks. The saint is oppressed with the knowledge of his condition of bondage and he wants to get rid of that. He wants to relieve himself from this ocean of bond of relations. He wishes to leave aside his family members to get peace. So he worships god. If there is want of something in life, man turns his mind towards others’ possessions. This is another kind of seeking freedom from demanding of something.

Satisfying other’s need falls into two categories. One is temporary and the other is permanent. The former is further divided into hourly relief and yearly relief. Both relieve the needy temporarily. In order to get over miseries in life, one must be taught with spiritual knowledge. It is the great benefactor of mankind. For instance, one’s hunger might be satisfied by eating but it would return to him again. This cannot be a real escape from misery. He must be satisfied somewhat beyond all want. If so, he would not be distressed by hunger or sorrow. That help which
tends to make one strong spiritually is the highest, next to it is the intellectual help and after that physical help.

To explain intellectual help, Vivekananda said that the world is filled with ignorant inhabitants who are equivalent to death. Ignorance is the mother of all the evil and all the misery that is witnessed. The only solution to this problem is to make mankind pure. Living in the dark is ignorance. Vivekananda’s philosophical ideas might eradicate this darkness. The best possible way is to change the man’s character into good. Converting every house in the country into a charity asylum and filling the land with hospitals cannot be a stoppage.

To profess his ideas of real freedom, Vivekananda said that Liberation means entire freedom that is from the bondage of good as well as from the bondage of evil. By removing a thorn from one’s finger, one must use another thorn to take the first one out. Having removed, he must throw both of them aside. There is no necessity of keeping the second one. Both are thorns after all. So the bad tendencies are to be counteracted by the good ones and the bad impressions on the mind should be removed by the fresh waves of good ones until they disappear completely. Thus the attached becomes unattached. One must consider himself as a stranger in this sojourn. Because the deep impression on the soul binds one to get down and makes not from freedom but like slaves.

It is impossible to ask anything from the siblings in return for what one has given them. It is one’s duty to work for them and there the matter
ends. Whatever one does for a particular person, a city, or a state, will assume the same attitude towards it as he has towards his children expecting nothing in return. Thus Vivekananda stressed that one should do one’s duty without expecting the reward.

While explaining absolute abnegation, Vivekananda quoted an incident from the greatest epic *The Mahabharata*. After the Kurushetra war, the Pandava brothers performed a great sacrifice and gave very large gifts to the poor. At the end of the ceremony, there came a little mongoose that proved what a real sacrifice was through a humble story. A poor Brahmin with his wife, son and daughter-in-law suffered and starved due to famine in the land. One day the father brought a little barley flour and it was divided into four parts and distributed among them. At that critical time there came a guest and a little portion of the father was served, next the wife’s and so on. After eating, the guest left the house satisfactorily but at the same night all the four died of starvation. This shows that Indians are best in their hospitality even though they are in utter poverty. It is noted that Indians are always feeling happy at other’s satisfaction. This concept is clearly explained in his writings on Karma yoga.