CHAPTER VI

ARTICULATION OF THE APPROACH: IN INDIA

Having returned to India from his visit to the West in February 1897, Swami Vivekananda stayed in India till June 1899. On June 20, 1899 he left for his second visit to the West. He returned to India from his second visit to the West on December 6, 1900, and breathed his last on his beloved India on July 4, 1902. During his stay in India in the two periods as mentioned above, he used the same Vedantic and Manlines approaches to the problem of human development in India as he used them in the West, but as to how and with what differences in emphases is something that we will be analysing in this chapter.

Before we launch into the analysis as proposed above, it will be in order to make the all-important observation that Swamiji’s work at raising the Man in India did not begin only after he returned to India from the West. As a matter of fact, Swamiji’s Indian work began actively with his Bharat Parikrama days. Having received the ‘charge’ from his Master Sri Ramakrishna to awaken the spiritual consciousness of man everywhere, particularly of his own country, and to work towards the amelioration of the conditions of the humanity, particularly of his own country, Swamiji set out on the Bharat Parikrama within a few years of the passing away of his Master and in the process came to know intimately the miserable conditions of the masses of India. His experiences made him resolve that he would get his brother-monks and the young men who would like to follow them to bring education, both spiritual and secular, to the door of poor Indians, making them educated in secular arts and science subjects and making them enlightened, above all, as to their divine essence.

He knew well that his proposed work towards the development of man in India needed a lot of money. India could not help him with funds. So, he resolved to go to America, the land of plenty, hoping that America would give him the needed funds. It did not take him long to be
disappointed. In the Parliament of Religions itself he expressed his disappointment on this count. As a matter of fact, he who went in search of funds, stayed back for three and a half years in the West—America and England, in particular, to give them freely of the age-old wisdom of India that lay stored in the Vedanta philosophy of India which he also turned into a religion of the divinity of man.

During his very strenuous work of elevating the man and civilization of the West, Swamiji was however never forgetful of his beloved India. As a matter of fact, India was always uppermost in his mind during his stay in the West and the numerous letters that he wrote to his brother-monks and his disciples in Madras bear testimony to this.

With these observations by way of filling in, we take note of Swami Vivekananda’s articulation of his approach to human development in India in the analysis that follows in this chapter. The analysis begins with Swamiji’s return journey to India from his first visit to the West.

I

What did the man in India and India as a nation need most? Swamiji’s unhesitating answer was that man in India needed most of all the manly spirit and that only with manly spirit roused in man, India could be regenerated and roused as a nation. That such was his thought during his return journey to India from his first visit to the West could be seen from an incident that took place on the ship itself one day in January 1897 when the ship was somewhere between Aden and Colombo. A Christian missionary, Swamiji’s fellow passenger on the ship, in the process of a conversation with Swamiji suddenly became so much abusive of India and of the religion of Hindus that Swamiji, with his persuasive arguments failing, had to threaten the missionary that unless he stopped abusing India and her religion and culture, he (Swamiji) would have to go to the length of throwing him into the sea. That worked in quietening down the abusive missionary and in making him promise as well to Swamiji that he would never indulge in such polemics again in future. In recounting this later to
one of his disciples, Swamiji observed that the message of this incident was that Indians – each of them – must be strong within and without, that only the religion of Vedanta which looked upon man as Atman with infinite powers could bring such strength to Indians and that such strength and manly spirit as enabled every Indian to stand upon his or her own feet was the crying need of India. This incident showed in clear terms that the Vedantic approach leading to manliness or so to say, a combination of the classical spiritual approach based on the Vedanta, and the manliness approach such as was relevant in modern times was what Swamiji wanted to highlight in the days ahead in India. From the most spiritual to the most practical, or, from the most classical to the most contemporary – was Swamiji’s approach to the development of man and nation in India.

An evidence of Swamiji’s Vedantic approach – that he will brush aside all distinctions of caste, community, creed etc. and treat all men as one in spirit – was seen at Aden, when Swamiji addressed a Hindustani betel-leaf seller as a brother and smoked from his hookah.

Swamiji’s ship reached Colombo in Ceylon on 15 January 1897 and the tumultuous welcome he received at Colombo showed to what extent he touched the heart of the people and filled them with pride with his spiritual ‘conquest’ of the West. Swamiji took the receptions accorded to him as the recognition given to the spirit of Vedanta and announced that the Vedantic principle of Oneness of all beings and of the divinity of man must be made the backbone and foundation of life by the people.

Having passed through the various places of Ceylon, Swamiji came on to his native land at Pamban on January 26, 1897 where he was accorded a touching welcome by the Raja of Ramnad, one of the early supporters of his trip to the West. In response to the welcome given to him, Swamiji observed feelingly that neither politics, nor military conquests nor commercial supremacy, but spirituality alone provided the backbone of the individual and national life of India and that through that speciality alone India could enrich herself as also the world. In continuation of the same theme Swamiji said later at Ramnad that each
nation had to play its part in the harmony of nations and that spirituality being the special strength of India, India could play its meaningful part in the world of nations only if she remained true to her special strength and that only through such truthful playing of her part India could ensure a glorious future for herself.

During his stay at Pamban, Swamiji paid a visit to the famous Shiva temple of Rameswaram where he articulated in the most lucid words the other aspect of his doctrine of human development pertaining to the service of fellow human beings. He stressed that service to people, especially, the poor, the weak and the diseased became meaningful and wholehearted only when such service was rendered with this spiritual knowledge that they all were the visible Shiva. To quote Swamiji:

He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of the caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples. … Shiva is the Master and this world is His garden, and there are two sorts of gardeners here; the one who is lazy, hypocritical, and does only talking about Shiva’s beautiful eyes and nose and other features; and the other, who is taking care of Shiva’s children, all those that are poor and weak. … Which of these would be the more beloved of Shiva? Certainly he that serves his children. He who serves the father must serve the children first.  

Having thus articulated the dual aspects of his doctrine of human development, namely spiritual knowledge of the oneness of humanity in divinity and of the infinite powers of the Atman that lay within every human being and the application of such knowledge to service of humanity, particularly the poor and the weak, Swamiji drew the attention of the Indians, next, to the material prosperity of the West. He said that
he appreciated the *rajas* that lay behind the material enterprises but sounded the warning all the same that unless the West learned to temper her materialism with spirituality such as India possessed, the Western civilization was likely to suffer a severe jolt, even a fall in the next fifty years. And how true the words of Swamiji were! Within fifty years of their utterance, Europe was shaken to its foundation by two World Wars.

Advancing further northwards into Manamadurai, Swamiji regretted that Indians were stepping away from their Vedantic foundation, their spirituality, so to say, by narrowing themselves down to their kitchen religions and cooking-pot gods. They who in the ancient past had given birth to the lofty philosophy of Vedanta had now reduced their religion to ‘don’t touchism’ and nothing could sap the strength of individual Indians and India as a nation than such indulgence in futilities. At Madurai, Swamiji said in continuation of the same theme that India had to steer clear of both the fanaticism of orthodoxy and the social reformism of the Europe-inspired reformers. India must learn for herself that all growth is from within and that without spiritual reform of the character and mindset of the individual first, no reform or nothing that is dictated from outside could do any lasting good to the development of man and nation in India.

An incident took place at Kumbhakonam which showed what Swamiji meant by change of mindset and character. Before he left for America in 1893 Swamiji had the occasion to meet one Govinda Chetti who, by virtue of his psychic powers, could tell people of things likely to happen to them in future. During his stay in Madras before his departure for America, Swamiji dreamt that his mother had died and this occasioned him to meet, at a friend’s instance, Govinda Chetti. Now, in February 1897, having seen Govinda Chetti in the crowd assembled to welcome him at Kumbhakonam, Swamiji asked Chetti if the money and honour his psychic powers brought to him also brought his mind any nearer to spirituality in the sense of his feeling of oneness with the God, the sum total of all souls. On hearing him answer in the negative, Swamiji assured Chetti that once he advanced on the path of spirituality in the sense as explained by
Swamiji, Chetti would see for himself that the earthly gains were not that significant or that important vis-à-vis the bliss of spirituality. Swamiji embraced Chetti as he uttered these words and as per the report of *The Life*, “the man’s psychic powers disappeared from that day” and he became a transformed man taking wholeheartedly to the path of spirituality.6

Why did the man in India need to embrace spirituality wholeheartedly? Swamiji’s answer to this question was that it was so, because spirituality alone could give the man in India the strength and vitality needed to develop himself to his true nature. To quote Swamiji:

Strength is goodness, weakness is sin. If there is one word that you find coming out like a bomb from the Upanishads, bursting like a bomb-shell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word fearlessness. And only religion that ought to be taught is the religion of fearlessness. Either in this world or in the world of religion it is true that fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil. What causes fear? Ignorance of our own nature. Each of us is heir-apparent to the Emperor of emperors; we are of the substance of God Himself. Nay, according to the Advaita, we are God Himself though we have have forgotten our own nature in thinking of ourselves as little men.7

Thus, the first necessity of man in India, is to remind himself of his infinite nature and then to stand up, be active and strong.8 Having known our real nature and having been active and strong and having thus developed ourselves we must also do our best to develop our fellow-beings. Why is it so? Because we are all one in essence. It is this Vedantic idea and its practical application to the development of man in India that Swamiji wanted to apply in India and it is this which we have called his Vedantic-cum-Manliness approach to human development. As Swamiji himself claimed of his Vedanta-based Manliness approach, “I tell you …
that it is the one great life-giving idea [of Vedanta] which the world wants from us today and which the mute masses of India want for their uplifting, for none can regenerate this land of ours without the practical application and effective operation of this ideal of the oneness of things\(^9\)

It stands to the credit of Swamiji that he turned this Indian Vedantic ideal – this ancient thing – into the modern and ever-relevant Manliness approach. As to how he did it is best stated in his own words:

We have had weeping enough; no more is this the time for us to become soft. This softness has been with us till we have become like masses of cotton and are dead. What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face. That is what we want.\(^{10}\)

What do we, Indians, need most to acquire manly spirit? Swamiji answered that the essential requirement towards that end was faith in ourselves, faith that Divinity resided within us and that we were nothing but divinities ourselves. As Swamiji said, “Have faith in yourselves, and stand up on that faith and be strong, that is what we need”\(^{11}\). Swamiji asked why it was that we – three hundred and thirty millions of Indians – had been ruled for the one thousand years by all kinds of foreigners and answered the question himself by observing that we were subjugated and ruled because the foreigners had faith in themselves and we had not it in us. In order to restore Indians’ faith in themselves, their manliness, so to say, Swamiji preached the Advaita Vedanta of the same infinite Atman living in every man and woman.

Looking at the fall and degeneration of India over the ages, Swamiji asked: Why did India degrade and degenerate? His answer was
that the reason lay in our higher classes treating the common masses of Indians as less than human beings. To quote his words:

Our aristocratic ancestors went on treading the Common masses of our country underfoot, till they became helpless, till under this torment the poor, poor people nearly forgot that they were human beings.¹²

To restore the faith of these hopeless people in themselves, to restore their manhood, so to say, was therefore the task that lay before all right-thinking Indians. Unfortunately, the educated people of India, observed Swamiji, “with all their boasted education of modern times” shrank “at once from the duty of lifting them up, these poor downtrodden people. Not only so, but I also find that all sorts of most demoniacal and brutal arguments, culled from the crude ideas of hereditary transmission and other such gibberish from the Western world, are brought forward in order to brutalise and tyrannise over the poor all the more”.¹³ Turning the hereditary argument over its head, Swamiji gave us something which remains as relevant for the concept of social justice in our times as it was at the time Swamiji spoke of it:

Ay, Brahmins, if the Brahmin has more aptitude for learning on the ground of heredity than the Pariah, spend no more money on the Brahmin’s education, but spend all on the Pariah. Give to the weak, for there all the gift is needed. …This is justice and reason as I understand it.¹⁴

What was Swamiji’s remedy for hereditary inequality among men, or for that matter, his remedy for the caste system? Swamiji’s remedy, needless to say, was Vedantic. As he put it:
Our poor people, these downtrodden masses of India … require to hear and know what they really are. Aye, let every man and woman and child, without respect of caste or birth, weakness or strength, hear and learn that behind the strong and the weak, behind the high and the low, behind every one, there is that Infinite soul, assuring the infinite possibility and infinite capacity of all to become great and good. Let us proclaim to every soul: … Arise, wake and stop not till the goal is reached. … Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak; the soul is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him! … Teach yourselves, teach every one his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when the sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity. 

Having stressed the Vedantic ideal and its role in rousing the human soul, the all-important addition that Swamiji made was that the ideal must be applied practically to the details of daily life. Vedanta, that is to say, must be turned into Practical Vedanta.

As regards the caste system as an impediment to human progress and development, Swamiji’s idea was to elevate everybody – from the highest man to the lowest Pariah – to the ideal Brahmin-hood. To quote him:

The command is the same to you all, that you must make progress without stopping, and that from the highest man to the lowest Pariah, every one in this country has to try and become the ideal Brahmin. This Vedantic idea is applicable not only here but over the whole world. Such is our ideal of caste as meant for raising all humanity slowly and gently towards the realisation of that great ideal of the spiritual man. …
This has to be attained by love and sympathy, by helping one and all attain spirituality. Thus, if caste is unavoidable, observed Swamiji, “I would rather have a caste of purity and culture and self-sacrifice, than a caste of dollars”.\(^{17}\)

As regards social reformation, Swamiji observed that neither outright denunciation nor blind imitation of European ideas nor for that matter any imposition of ideas on people from above or outside will do. Reforms, like the growth of the individual, must come from within man himself. To quote Swamiji’s inimitable words:

I am no preacher of any momentary social reform. I am not trying to remedy evils, I only ask you to go forward and to complete the practical realisation of the scheme of human progress that has been laid out in the most perfect order by our ancestors. I only ask you to work to realise more and more the Vedantic ideal of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature.\(^{18}\)

In brief, Swamiji gave the Indians the ideal of Vedanta towards the elevation and development of man in India (as also elsewhere in the world) and inspired them to work towards the realization of that goal. As he said by way of exhorting Indians, each one of them:

Carry the light and the life of the Vedanta to every door, and rouse up the divinity that is hidden within every soul. Then, whatever may be the measure of your success, you will have this satisfaction that you have lived, worked and died for a great cause. In the success of this great cause, however brought about, is centred the salvation of humanity here and hereafter.\(^{19}\)

Indeed, in the Vedantic ideal of the inborn \textit{divine} nature of man and its manly realization through \textit{faith}, \textit{strength} and \textit{fearlessness} lay a
combination of the Vedantic and Manliness approaches that Swamiji articulated tirelessly towards development of man everywhere, as much in the West as in India.

II

Having given an idea of his Vedantic and Manliness approaches towards the elevation and development of man in India, Swamiji explained in elaboration of his Vedantic and Manliness approaches just why life was to be lived manfully with struggles against adverse circumstances and just why the Vedantic approach was infinitely better than the so-called reform approach.

First, he gave examples from his own life to drive home the point that life was a struggle and such struggles had to be carried on manfully. Before he left for the USA for the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, he asked the then leader of the Theosophical Society in India, an American himself, for a letter of introduction which the latter refused because he would not agree to accept the creed of the Theosophists as a pre-condition for such letter being given to him. Having arrived at Chicago in July 1893, a good two months before the Parliament of Religions was to start, he soon ran out of money. Winter approached and he did not know how to survive with his thin summer clothes. He did not even know where and how he would eat his meal the next day. He could not beg as begging was against the law in the United States. In sheer desperation he sent a wire to his friends in Madras, and when the Theosophists came to know of this, one of them wrote gleefully, “Now the devil is going to die; God bless us all”\(^{20}\). And having seen the ‘devil’ later on the platform of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, some of the Theosophists who were present there could not conceal their heart-burn in expressing themselves with words such as “What business has the worm to be here in the midst of the Gods?”\(^{21}\). And the irony of it all was that in the aftermath of his return to India with brilliant successes in the Parliament of Religions and later in America and England, the same Theosophists began to claim that but for the help given by them to him in America, he could not really succeed there!
Of the other group opposing Swamiji in America – the Christian missionaries, Swamiji had the following to say in Madras in the speech he delivered in the Victoria Hall in Madras on the evening of February 9, 1897:

There is not one black lie imaginable that these latter[ the Christian missionaries] did not invent against me. They blackened my character from city to city, poor and friendless though I was in a foreign country. They tried to oust me from every house and to make every man who became my friend my enemy. They tried to starve me out; and I am sorry to say that one of my own countrymen took part against me in this. He is the leader of a reform party in India.22

Swamiji’s object behind mentioning these incidents was to tell his audience and through them the Indians at large that such things had to be faced up to, taking life as a saga of struggle. One must struggle and struggle on in life. That is one definition of manliness that the Indians had to actualize in life in order to develop into true human beings.

Swamiji’s second assertion was that reform approach could not bring any lasting benefit to India. Behind reform approach was criticism, condemnation and dictation – “this way thou shouldst move and not that”.23 And what have the reformists with their critical and condemnatory approach achieved? Swamiji answers: “For a hundred years they [the reformists] have been here. What good has been done except the creation of a most vituperative, a most condemnatory literature?”24 To lecture someone on the evils that exist in society and then leave him at that is like telling a drowning boy of the virtues of swimming when he is crying out pleading that he be taken out of the water first. Thus, Swamiji pleaded that India had enough of lectures, societies and papers. What she badly needed indeed was men with love, sympathy and the constructive method along with the zeal to put that method into action, that is to say, not criticizing or condemnation but a helping hand to drag the drowning man of India out of the water.
And along with lending a helping hand to the drowning man, he has to be given the education to this effect that he is not really as helpless as he thinks himself to be. He has to be taught that he has the infinite powers of his own lying deposited in himself. He has to bring those potential powers out. Undoubtedly, the solution of the problem is not so easy and it is also undoubtedly true that we cannot have it solved at one go. But then one has to go to the very root of the matter, to the very basis of the soul, to the Atman that every human being is and thus, every human being in India has to be gradually brought up to the highest ideal. Rama’s bridge over the ocean was not built in a day nor was it built by the efforts of any single person. Every human being in India has to be inspired so that everybody, like the squirrel contributing its little quota of sand-dust, contributes his mite to the building of himself and of every other human being in India. Inspired with the ideal of realizing the highest ideal, everybody will set himself to the task of actualizing his highest potential and such growth and development to the highest must come from within everybody spontaneously and not by way of any imposition or dictation from outside or above.

The problem with the reform approach was on two counts: one, such reforms touched only little bits; second, they touched only the first two castes, and not the people in general. To quote Swamiji:

Every one of these reforms only touches the first two castes, and no other. The question of widow marriage would not touch seventy per cent of the Indian women, and all such questions only reach the higher castes of Indian people, who are educated, mark you, at the expense of the masses. Every effort has been spent in cleaning their own houses. But that is no reformation. You must go down to the basis of the thing, to the very root of the matter.  

“Going down to the basis of the thing, to the very root of the matter” is what Swamiji called radical reform or root-and-branch reform, and with the Vedantic approach that he advocated towards this end, it was growth
from within rather than reform from without. This is the real significance of Swamiji’s statement that “I do not believe in reform; I believe in growth”. And growth is best encouraged when an individual is not criticized and condemned but is encouraged by telling him in the fashion of great teachers of India such as Shankaracharya, Ramanuja and Sri Ramakrishna: “O man, you have been good, but you can certainly be better now” or, “what you have done is good, but you can certainly do better”. As Swamiji observed, “We must grow according to our nature. … This is the first lesson to learn”.

III

Having posited that life is a struggle – struggle against circumstances and forces that seek to press man down and that the reform approach is not the solution to problems of development of man in India, Swamiji, next, laid out his plan of campaign in India towards the realization of his goal of development of man.

First, his plan was to tell every man and woman in India that spirituality formed the core of everybody’s life in India. Spirituality or the doctrine that Atman is Paramatman is the most humane doctrine that has been laid down in the Upanishads. It simply means that man is divine in the essential nature of his being and that man has to do his utmost to realize his divinity with all the strength and powers of his soul in this life and on this world. With spirituality running in the blood of every Indian and with spiritual life forming the centre or the keynote of the music of national life in India, every Indian, indeed India herself, must seek to vitalize individual and national life of India through spirituality alone, not through social reform or politics. Indeed, social reform or politics in India, in order to have any impact on the individual and society, must be preached through spirituality. “In India”, observes Swamiji, “social reform has to be preached by showing how much more spiritual a life the new system will bring; and politics has to be preached by showing how much it will improve the one thing that the nation wants – its spirituality.”
If that is so, then it logically follows that for any improvement in India, particularly in the socio-political sphere, first, spiritual ideas have to be spread and then only such socio-political ideas as are in conformity with the spiritual are to be pursued. This further means that the wonderful truths of the Upanishads have to be brought out from the monasteries, from forests and caves and from the possession of an exclusive body of Brahmin pandits and scattered broadcast all over India, making it available to every Indian. Every Indian must be induced to hear the wonderful truths of the Vedanta, to think upon them and to meditate upon them. Thus the first point in Swamiji’s plan of campaign towards raising the Man in India was to preach the truths of the Upanishads bringing spiritual knowledge of Oneness and of strength and fearlessness to every Indian man and woman.

Swamiji’s second point was to start institutions in India, so that with appropriate training received in these institutions, the young men can start their preaching work towards the end as mentioned above. Swamiji firmly believed that with spiritual knowledge of Oneness, faith, strength and fearlessness honestly brought to the masses of India, they who, for centuries had to work as mere hewers of wood and drawers of water and who, on account of their sub-human existence for centuries lost all faith in themselves, can be raised for certain. As Swamiji said:

Let them hear of the Atman – that even the lowest of the low have the Atman within, which never dies and never is born – of Him whom the sword cannot pierce, nor the fire burn, nor the air dry – immortal, without beginning or end, the all pure, omnipotent, and omnipresent Atman! Let them have faith in themselves. …

Having his preachers to preach to the effect as mentioned above, Swamiji asserted:
It is a man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want. And here is the test of truth — anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually, and spiritually, reject as poison. ... truth must be strengthening, must be enlightening, must be invigorating. 32

How about mysticisms that are taken by many as the be-all and end-all of spiritual life? Swamiji’s unhesitating answer is that “These mysticisms, in spite of some grains of truth in them, are generally weakening. Believe me, I have a life-long experience of it, and the one conclusion that I draw is that it is weakening ... Give up these weakening mysticisms and be strong. Go back to your Upanishads. The truths of the Upanishads are before you. Take them up, live up to them” 32a and thus be developed in the true sense of the term. That was the mantra Swamiji gave to his fellow-Indians. And needless to say that in these words of Swamiji, one gets in a nutshell all about his Vedantic and Manliness approaches to the development of man.

Since man was at the centre of Swamiji’s thoughts on development, Swamiji put his finger on three human qualities as the defining characteristics of patriotism. First, only he is a patriot and lover of all men of his country who feels for his fellow countrymen, who feels intensely for the starving millions of his country, who feels restless at the overwhelming ignorance prevailing among his countrymen. Citing his personal example, Swamiji observed that it was feeling, intense feeling for his countrymen, the thought to do something for them, for their improvement that took him to America. The Parliament of Religions provided only an occasion for him. He was least bothered about any name or fame coming to him in the wake of the Parliament. Feeling, of course, Swamiji was quick to add, did not mean spending one’s energy in frothy talk. It meant instead directing one’s energy towards finding a way out, a practical solution for the problems of one’s countrymen and it certainly meant lending a helping
hand by all means so that the needy among one’s countrymen can come out of their living death.

Secondly, only he is a patriot who has the will to surmount mountain-high obstructions and the will to stand at all costs for what one thinks to be right.

Finally, only he is a patriot who has the steadfastness of purpose and, come what may, who does not move one inch from the way of truth.

Swamiji concluded his discourse on ‘My Plan of Campaign’ with this observation that no Indian should ever forget that the national ship has been ferrying the millions of souls across the water to the other shore for centuries. If the ship now developed some leak here and there, the appropriate course of action is not to condemn it but to do one’s very best to plug the leak and keep it going. In such a helpful approach to one’s fellow-beings in one’s country as also elsewhere lies the way to all-round development of man.

IV

Why was Swamiji untiring in his assertion that Vedanta, the philosophy of the Upanishads, was the first as well as the final thought on the spiritual plane “that has ever been vouchsafed to man”32b and that the Vedanta-based approach must be used to the development of man, particularly in India? Was it not true that many Indians were followers of Puranas, Tantras and that some were Vaidikas as followers of the Karma Kanda of the Vedas? And the second query that he had to face and answer was: did he mean by Vedanta the Advaita (pure monism) alone?

Let us see how Swamiji faced these two criticisms of his Vedantic approach. As to the first critique that many people of India followed usually the Puranas or Tantras, his answer was that that did not make them any less the Vedantists because they all subscribed to certain doctrines of the Vedanta. First, they all believed in the doctrine of Samsara or reincarnation of the soul. Secondly, they all agreed in their psychology
that man was in the ultimate analysis Jivatman, that first there was the body, that within the body was the Antahkarana or the mind and beyond both the body and the mind was the soul or the Atman. The Atman was eternal in being without beginning or end and that it evolved into various bodies from birth to birth, until it got a final release on attaining the perfection of oneness with the Supreme Soul. The Hindu people of India believed that all powers and all purity and all greatness was already there in the soul and that the work of man lay in making them manifest. Swamiji used the famous example as given by Patanjali to make this point clear. The cultivator had to bring water into his field from a huge tank somewhere. “The tank is already filled and the water would flood his land in a moment, only there is a mud-wall between the tank and his field. As soon as the barrier is broken, it rushes the water out of its power and force”. Thus, all power, all purity, all perfection is there already in the Atman of men. The only thing is that man has to tear down the ‘mud-wall’, the veil, to manifest it. Since all the Hindu people of India accepted this doctrine of Atman, Swamiji suggested that “The people who call themselves Hindus had better be called Vedantists”. Swamiji went on to observe of the Vedantists that “In the Atman they found the solution – the greatest of all Atmans, the God, the Lord of this universe, His relation to the Atman of man, our duty to Him, and through that our relation to each other”. As to the second critique whether he meant by Vedanta Advaita or pure monism alone, Swamiji’s answer was that while Advaitism was undoubtedly the Vedanta par excellence, Vedanta covered the ground of qualified monism and dualism as well in India. Elsewhere, he says that “my mission in life [is] to show that the Vedantic schools are not contradictory, that they all necessitate each other, all fulfil each other, and one, as it were, is the stepping-stone to the other, until the goal, the Advaita, the Tat Tvam Asi, is reached”. In order to substantiate this thesis, Swamiji held that the Upanishads had all begun with dualistic ideas and ended with a grand flourish of Advaitic ideas. He referred to the symbolical picture of two birds. One sitting on the lower branch of a true
and the other on the higher branch of the same tree to show how the
Upanishads through this symbolical picture gave the most perfect
expression to the whole philosophy of the world as also to the whole
dream of the Hindu ideal of freedom. The picture is best presented in the
words of Swamiji himself:

Upon the same tree there are two birds of beautiful plumage – the one on the lower branch eating sweet and bitter fruits in turn and becoming happy and unhappy, but the other on the top, calm and majestic; he eats neither sweet nor bitter fruits, cares neither for happiness nor misery, immersed in his own glory. This is the picture of the human soul.  

The message is that the man is really the higher bird, which he forgets and keeps careering, pursuing in the process name, fame and fortune or eating, so to say, the sweet and bitter fruits of this life. After a while, as the ‘lower bird’ in man looks up, he finds some light from the higher bird playing around his own plumage. This sets the transformation on in the lower bird; it goes nearer and nearer to the higher bird only to find itself melting away into the higher bird and disappearing altogether. The final discovery of the lower bird before it melted away into the higher bird was that “He did not really exist; it was but the reflection of the other bird who was there calm and majestic amidst the moving leaves. It was all his glory, that upper bird’s. He then becomes fearless, perfectly satisfied, calmly serene”. “In this figure”, observes Swamiji, “the Upanishads take you from the dualistic to the utmost Advaitic conception.”

V

Having taken care of the critiques of his Vedantic approach, Swamiji dwelt on the following positives of Vedanta in bringing about the development of man.
1. Vedanta gave man the most complete religious knowledge in discovering Tat Tvam Asi (Thou art That).

2. It teaches principles and not persons. Its sanction lies in the eternal nature of man, its ethics in the eternal spiritual solidarity of man, not in the personal authority of any Buddha, Christ or Muhammad.

3. It excludes all imaginary deities as also all imaginary heaven and asks man to worship instead all other human beings, living and walking in our midst in this world as living Gods.

4. It asks man to take all external manifestations of spiritual power by any man anywhere in the world as His (Lord’s) manifestation and in so doing Vedanta includes in its infinite arms all the ideals of religions that exist in the world or that might come into existence in the future.

5. It holds that senses are not the all-in-all or the be-all and end-all of the human being and exhorts man to go beyond the senses in order to arrive at the truths of the spiritual world, pointing out in the process that the Rishis of India were so called because they indeed had the direct perception of the spiritual truths. It assured man that it was within the power of every man to attain to such Rishi-state. Thus, according to Vedanta, Pratyaksha or the direct perception was the goal of religion. Talking second-hand or third-hand led only to fights and quarrels over religion. That is what the world is used to doing, forgetting that, observes Swamiji, “Religion is not in books, nor in theories, nor in dogmas, nor in talking, not even in reasoning. It is being and becoming”. Each man has to reach the Atman in him, the Divine within, each has to become a Rishi by coming face to face with spiritual facts. As Swamiji pointed out in his inimitable words, “Let us speak to all the nations of the world in the language of the Vedas : Vain are your fights and your quarrels; have you seen God whom you want to preach? If you have not seen, vain is your preaching; you do not know what you say; and if you have seen God, you will not quarrel, your very face
will shine. … You will be a blessing to mankind.\footnote{42} Thus viewed, Rishi-\textit{hood} was the ideal of the religion of Vedanta. To say the same thing, according to Vedanta, freedom or salvation of man lay in attaining the Rishi-\textit{hood}. As Swamiji observed, “Not belief in doctrines, not going to thousands of temples, nor bathing in all the rivers of the world, but becoming the Rishi, the \textit{Mantra-dr\textit{a}shtha} – that is freedom, that is salvation.”\footnote{43}

6. Vedanta that Lord Krishna preached in the \textit{Gita}, constituted for the first time in the history of humanity the grandest of human ideals – love for love’s sake, duty for duty’s sake, work for work’s sake. Vedanta such as preached by Lord Krishna had the effect of pushing into the background all religions of fear, temptation and shopkeeping – fear of hell, temptation of enjoyment in heaven and shopkeeping of “I give you worship, O Lord, you give me something in return”. In fact, Vedanta discards the idea of fear as also of heaven and stands instead for the divinity, self-belief, strength and fearlessness of Atman within every man. Let the human soul rise up and up, step after step, until it reaches the Absolute, the goal. That is what the \textit{Gita}, the greatest commentary ever written on the Vedanta, stands for.

In short, the greatness of Vedanta and the approach based on Vedanta lies in breaking the bondages of all, the chains of all, and in declaring liberty to all to reach the highest goal.

\textbf{VI}

Since the Upanishads, as the previous section shows, were the most humane literature that the world had ever produced and since no literature had painted the whole dream of human development and of the sublime in man in more beautiful language than that of the Upanishads, Swamiji naturally based his basic approach to human development on Vedanta, but having done that, he transformed the classical philosophico-religious
Vedantic approach into the more contemporary and more secular Manliness approach. In lecture after lecture that he delivered in India he spoke of shraddha or faith in one’s self, and of strength and fearlessness. Swamiji’s constant refrain to his fellow Indians was, “You must stand on your own feet, be strong as strength itself and yet possess a woman’s heart. You must feel for the millions of beings around you”.44 We will quote extensively from Swamiji’s own lectures in order to provide the best documentation of how he sought to infuse into the Indians the spirit of manliness and thereby produce the national vigour.

In the lecture delivered at Madras entitled ‘Vedanta in its Application to Indian Life’45, Swamiji made the eloquent plea to the young men of Madras in favour of the cultivation of strength or freedom from weakness in the following words:

Strength, strength is what the Upanishads speak to me from every page. This is the one thing to remember, it has been the one great lesson I have been taught in life; strength, it says, strength, O man, be not weak. Are there no human weaknesses? – says man. There are, say the Upanishads, but will more weaknesses heal them, would you try to wash dirt with dirt? Will sin cure sin, weakness cure weakness? Strength, O man, strength, say the Upanishads, stand up and be strong. Aye, it is the only literature in the world where you find the word “Abhih”, “fearless”, used again; and again, in no other scripture in the world is this adjective applied either to God or to man.46

Swamiji gave an example of what strength was like by citing the instance of a conversation between an old Indian Sannyasin and the great Emperor of the West, Alexander the Great. Almost naked and starving, the sannyasin was profoundly learned all the same. Astonished at the wisdom of the Sannyasin, Alexander tempted him with gold and honour to come over to Greece. With the Sannyasin spurning the Emperor’s offer,
Alexander threatened to kill him to which the man gave a characteristic reply: “Who can kill me? Me you kill, Emperor of the material world! Never! For I am Spirit unborn and undecaying: Never was I born and never do I die; I am the Infinite, the Omnipresent, the Omniscient; and you kill me, child that you are!” Having made a reference to this reply of the Sannyasin, Swamiji observes:

That is strength that is strength! And the more I read the Upanishads, my friends, my countrymen, the more I weep for you, for therein is the great practical application. Strength, strength for us. What we need is strength.  

Swamiji raises the question: who or what will give us strength? He answers it himself by saying that in the midst of all-round weakening of the nation in the last thousand years, the Upanishads can serve as the great mine of strength:

Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energised through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upanishads.

In spite of the greatness of the Upanishads and its call to be free from bonds of nature and weakness, the Indians, Swamiji observed, remained weak for several reasons. First, they were lazy and negligent in their work. Secondly, they were intensely selfish and jealous of each other. Thirdly, their selfishness and jealousy made it impossible for them to unite. Fourthly, disorganized as they were, they could not put up a united front against the foreign invading armies for centuries. Fifthly, they spoke of
many things parrot-like but never follow them in practice. And behind all the five mentioned herein lurked the physical weakness of the Indians. The first necessity therefore, for the Indians, as Swamiji diagnosed it, was that:

Our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. …You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. … You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the Atman when your body stands firm upon your feet, and you feel yourselves as men.  

Having been physically strong, the young men of India, said Swamiji, will draw upon the Upanishads to fortify themselves with faith in themselves. They will repeat to themselves day and night the blessed words of the Upanishads to this effect that I am the infinitely powerful, infinitely pure and holy Atman, “Me the sword cannot cut; nor weapons pierce, me the fire cannot burn, me the air cannot dry; I am the Omnipotent, I am the Omniscient”.

Every young man of India, being fortified with strength and faith of Atman will say to himself, there is nothing that I cannot do or that I can do anything and everything. As Swamiji exhorted to every young man of India, “stand up a giant, a world-mover with a gigantic intellect – an infinite God in every respect. That is what I want you to become”.

Swamiji brought these two conceptions – strength and faith – of Vedanta out from the forests and caves and put it to work, as he himself said, “at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit, and in the cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying”. His call was to everyone, every man and woman in every occupation of life. To quote Swamiji:
Let every one do what little he can. If the fisherman thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better fisherman; if the student thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be better student. If the lawyer thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better lawyer, and so on ….

Having been better human beings in this way, every Indian will look upon every man and woman in India as God and serve the children of Lord as Lord Himself. They will serve especially the Lord in the shape of the poor and downtrodden and consider themselves as the privileged for being allowed to serve the Lord in such shapes. And what will be overall effect of such effort of Swamiji turning the Vedantic approach into the Manliness approach? The result will be better man, better society, better governance with all-round national vigour. And for all that, the additional gain will be the liberty of the individual (every one will grow by his or her nature) and the equality of all. As Swamiji put it candidly:

If you teach Vedanta to the fisherman, he will say, I am as good a man as you; I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same God in me as you have in you. And that is what we want, no privilege for any one, equal chances for all; let every one be taught that the divine is within and every one will work out his own salvation.

VII

In working out one’s own salvation, Swamiji cautioned as well as warned Indians that they, every one of them must guard against any ideas that weakened them. He identified two such ideas. The one was the blind imitation of the West with its rank materialism and the other was the blind pursuit of arrant superstitions. The first made the Indians disrespectful of their own thoughts, culture and civilization and the second
degenerated their life and weakened their brain. “Avoid these two”, said Swamiji. They weakened the man in India and as one who detested such weakening at the individual and national level, Swamiji asserted with all the strength at his command:

Brave, bold men, these are what we want. What we want is vigour in the blood, strength in the nerves, iron muscles and nerves of steel, not softening namby-pamby ideas.56a

“Be strong, and stand on your own feet”, was the constant message of Swami Vivekananda. That was also the main idea of his Manliness approach. Being strong and standing on one’s feet meant however another thing to him. It meant that Indians of the present time had to excel their great ancestors: they had to be greater than them. Holding that it was within the power of every Indian to be a Vyasa, Valmiki or a Shankaracharya, he asserted with the fullest faith and self-confidence of the great ancients:

They were great, these ancients, but we want to be greater. They did great work in the past, but we must do greater work than they. They had hundreds of Rishis in ancient India. We will have millions – we are going to have, and the sooner every one of you believes in this, the better for India and the better for the world.57

And in the wake of such assertion came the assurance that was typical of Swami Vivekananda and that showed how beautifully he harmonized his doctrine of Atman, his Vedantic approach and his Manliness approach in terms of the individual’s belief or faith in himself and the strength issuing therefrom:
Whatever you believe, that you will be. If you believe yourself to be sages, sages you will be tomorrow. There is nothing to obstruct you. For if there is one common doctrine that runs through all our apparently fighting and contradictory sects, it is that all glory, power and purity are within the soul already. … All power is within you; you can do anything and everything. Believe in that, do not believe that you are weak…. You can do anything and everything without even the guidance of any one. All power is there. Stand up and express the divinity within you.58

VIII

According to Swamiji, the basic problem in man-making as also in nation-building in India lay in the weakening of man. Man had been weakened over the last thousand years along the lines of religion, caste, race; man had also been weakened by negative thinking on education as also by lack of will power. So, for a solution of the problem, India had to go back to the roots of the matter and “strengthen the man”.59

By religion, Swamiji did not mean any conventional religion nor any religious sects. Religion meant to him the one eternal religion by which he meant the perception of the Divine within or, to say the same thing, the divinity of human beings and the spirituality of life. The man was to express his inner or inborn divinity in every movement of life and thereby establish his spirituality or the fact that he is the all-powerful, pure and holy Atman. According to Swamiji, since “the Indian mind was first religious, then anything else”, 60 and since spirituality constituted the life-blood of Indians, the first effort towards strengthening the Indian mind had to begin with religion. His idea in this regard was on the following counts:

a) to bring out the gems of spirituality stored up in the scriptures such as the Upanishads;
b) to release them from the possession of a few in the monasteries, caves and forests;

c) to translate them from Sanskrit which was inaccessible to the masses into the vernaculars; and

d) to make the gems of spirituality (brought out in ways mentioned above) the common property of all, of every man and woman in India;

e) to teach the masses the ideas of spirituality in the vernaculars, but to encourage them all the same to learn the Sanskrit language, because Sanskrit alone, Swamiji felt, can fortify education with culture.\(^6\) Swamiji is worth-quoting on this point:

Teach the masses in the vernaculars, give them ideas; they will get information, but something more is necessary, give them culture. Until you give them that, there can be no permanence in the raised condition of the masses. There will be another caste, having the advantage of the Sanskrit language, which will quickly get above the rest and rule them all the same.\(^6\) The only safety, I tell you men who belong to the lower castes, the only way to raise your condition is to study Sanskrit, and this fighting and writing and frothing against the higher castes is in vain, it does no good, and it creates fight and quarrel, and this race, unfortunately already divided, is going to be divided more and more. The only way to bring about the levelling of caste is to appropriate the culture, the [Sanskrit]education which is the strength of the higher castes. That done, you have what you want.\(^6\)

That brings us to the problem of weakening of man in India due to the caste system of India. Swamiji’s opinion on the issue was clear-cut. Fighting among castes can only exacerbate the relations of castes and intensify the existing divide along caste line. The solution lies not in
fighting, not in bringing down the higher castes but in raising up the lower castes to the level of the higher castes by giving them appropriate education and culture. The onus in this regard is as much on the lower castes as on the higher castes. The Brahmins must open their treasury of virtue and culture and distribute its valuables to the lower castes. “To the Brahmins I appeal”, said Swamiji, “that they must work hard to raise the Indian people by teaching them what they know, by giving out the culture that they have accumulated for centuries”.64 The lower castes must also be similarly opening up. It will be immensely valuable to quote Swamiji’s words, as directed to the lower castes, in view of the complexity of a problem, which is eating into the vitals of the nation to this day. To quote the words of Swamiji:

To the non-Brahmin castes, I say, wait, be not in a hurry. Do not seize every opportunity of fighting the Brahmin, because as I have shown, you are suffering from your own fault. Who told you to neglect spirituality and Sanskrit learning? What have you been doing all this time? Why have you been indifferent? Why do you now fret and fume, because somebody else had more brains, more energy, more pluck and go than you? Instead of wasting your energies in vain discussions and quarrels in the newspapers, instead of fighting and quarrelling in your own homes — which is sinful — use all your energies in acquiring the culture which the Brahmin has, and the thing is done.65

Swamiji hoped that with the lower castes themselves working out their own salvation by making efforts towards raising themselves up and with the Brahmins lending a genuinely helping hand towards raising the lower castes, everybody can, in the fulness of time, reach the ideal solution of the caste problem in India: everybody, so to say, be he of lower or higher caste, can reach the Brahminhood or better still, the Rishi-hood that was the original condition of the caste system in India. As the Mahabharata, as cited by Swamiji, provides:
In the beginning of the Satya Yuga there was only one caste, the Brahmins, and then by difference of occupations they went on dividing themselves into different castes, and that is the only true and rational explanation that has been given. And in the coming Satya Yuga all the other castes will have to go back to the same condition.\(^{66}\)

In practical terms, this means that the Brahmin and the Chandala who stand at the opposite extremes of the spectrum will have to mend their forces and the whole work is to raise the Chandala up to the Brahmin, slowly and slowly and perhaps, through the granting of facilities to Chandala.\(^{67}\) In any case, the aim must be to raise all to Brahminhood or Rishihood. That was the end towards which the great souls such as Shankaracharya worked. To quote Swamiji:

Shankaracharya [and other epoch-makers of his kind] were the great caste-makers. I cannot tell you all the wonderful things they fabricated, and some of you may resent what I have to say, but in my travels and experiences I have traced them out, and have arrived at the most wonderful results. They would sometimes get hordes of Baluchis and at once make them Kshatriyas, also get hold of hordes of fishermen and make them Brahmins forthwith. They were all Rishis and sages, and we have to bow down to their memory. So, be you all Rishis and sages; that is the secret. More or less we shall all be Rishis. What does a Rishi mean? The pure one. The pure one. Be pure first, and you will have power.\(^{68}\)

Swamiji disapproved of fighting and quarrelling not only over castes but also over so-called racial division in India between the Aryans and the Dravidians. It was claimed that the Aryans who belonged to the
North of India were different as a race from the Dravidians who belonged to the South. Swamiji laughed at such racial division of India which also involved a North-South regional divide. Except for the difference in language between the North and the South, observed Swamiji:

I do not see any other difference. We are so many Northern men here, and I ask my European friends to pick out the Northern and Southern men from this assembly. … Do not believe in such silly things. There may have been a Dravidian people who vanished from here [the South], and the few who remained lived in forests and other places. It is quite possible that the language may have been taken up, but all these are Aryans who came from the North. The whole of India is Aryan, nothing else.\textsuperscript{69}

Swamiji rejected two other theories. The one claimed that the Aryans came from outside India or that they were not the original inhabitants of India. Swamiji pointed out that had it been so, the ancient scriptures of India must have mentioned this in some way or the other somewhere in their contents. But there was absolutely no reference to this in the scriptures of India which proved that the theory was unfounded. The other theory was that the Shudra caste was all non-Aryans, that they were a multitude and that they lived as the slaves of the Aryans. Swamiji rejected this theory as illogical and irrational with an observation which deserves to be quoted for the sheer wit of it:

It could not have been possible in those days that a few Aryans settled and lived there [in India] with a hundred thousand slaves at their command. These slaves would have eaten them up, and made “chutney” of them in five minutes.\textsuperscript{70}
Among other things that left Indians weak was the prevalent system of what he called negative education. Such education, Swamiji observed, had at best put some information into the brains of students which, unfortunately for most students, remained undigested all through their life. In place of such negative education, what was needed, said Swamiji, was a man-making education\(^71\) that gave the students “life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas.”\(^72\) Without such man-making education producing character and enabling men to stand on their own feet, asserted Swamiji, there could not have been any salvation either for the Indians individually or for India as a nation collectively. Swamiji’s ideal as well as plan, therefore, was that “We must have the whole education of our country, spiritual and secular, in our own hands, and it must be on national lines, through national methods, as far as practical.”\(^73\) Swamiji’s plan involved the founding of an institution for training teachers who would preach religion and impart secular education to people. Such teachers would carry religion as also secular education to the door of the people, making each of them, each Indian, man and woman, strong with knowledge and faith in themselves. India’s future, said Swamiji, depended on the making of such men and women in abundance – human beings with faith in themselves, with the will to organize themselves, with the will to co-ordinate their wills and accumulate power therefrom.

“It is the will that is the power”, \(^74\) said Swamiji. With such assertion, Swamiji gives us a clear inkling into his opinion as to the chief reason for the British conquest of India and as to the way to secure release from the British rule of India. To get the full psychological cum political significance of Swamiji’s opinion, we should quote his own words:

Why is it, to take a case in point, that forty millions of Englishmen rule three hundred millions of people here? What is the psychological explanation? Those forty millions put their wills together and that means infinite power, and you three hundred millions
Swamiji went on to say that over the centuries the Indians had been kicked around by foreigners. The time had now come for the slaves to become great masters. The first requisite in that connection was to overcome the weaknesses that depleted the strength of the individuals that constituted the nation. To quote him:

So give up being a slave. For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote – this, our great Mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for the time from our minds. … The first goods we have to worship are our countrymen. These we have to worship, instead of being jealous of each other and fighting each other.

In brief, Swamiji’s message was that instead of frittering away their energies into quarrels and fights over sects, faiths, castes, races and regions, the Indians, with the help of man-making religion and education, and with the accumulation of power achieved from the organization and coordination of wills, should develop themselves into strong and powerful Individuals. With individuals being strong and powerful and with such developed individuals being the chief constituent of the power of a nation, India, Swamiji asserted, would certainly develop as a great nation.

IX

Swamiji’s worry was not over the funds in giving shape to his plan to raise the individual or the nation as a collectivity of individuals. His concern was over men who would take up a great ideal and give up their whole life to it. As he said:
Where are the men? That is the question. Young men of Madras, my hope is in you. Will you respond to the call of your nation? Each one of you has a glorious future if you dare believe me. Have a tremendous faith in yourselves, like the faith I had when I was a child, and which I am working out now. Have that faith, each one of you, in yourself — that eternal power is lodged in every soul — and you will revive the whole of India. Ay, we will then go to every country under the sun, and our ideas will before long be a component of the many forces that are working to make up every nation in the world. We must enter into the life of every race in India and abroad; we shall have to work to bring this about. Now for that, I want young men.77

Swamiji had inveterate faith in the young men of India. In fact, they were his chief target-group in man-making. He believed that they could be best persuaded to take up a great ideal and sacrifice themselves for the welfare of the rest of humanity in India. Thus, be it in Madras or Calcutta or Lahore, he would appeal to them in stirring words to arise, to have genuine faith in themselves and to be brave like Nachiketa and Guru Govind Singh. To give an example, Swamiji had the following to say to the young men of Calcutta by way of exhorting them to make true men of them:

Young men of Calcutta, arise, awake. Be bold and fear not. It is only in our scriptures that this adjective is given unto the Lord — Abhīh, Abhīh. We have to become Abhīh, fearless, and our task will be done, Arise, awake, for your country needs this tremendous sacrifice. It is the young men that will do it. ... arise, young men of Calcutta with enthusiasm in your blood. Think not that you are poor. ... Ay, who ever saw money make the man? It is man that always makes money. The whole world has been made by the energy of man, by the power of enthusiasm, by the power of faith.79
Swamiji cited the example of Nachiketa from “the most beautiful of all the Upanishads, the Katha”\(^{80}\) to indicate what Shraddha or genuine faith in oneself and true bravery meant. Nachiketa’s father was making a great sacrifice and giving away things to others. Nachiketa asked his father to whom he was giving Nachiketa away. The father at first pretended not to hear the query but annoyed at the persistent query of his young son, he replied that he was giving Nachiketa to Yama, the God of death. At this, Nachiketa went up to the House of Death, waited at the doorstep for three days for an audience with Yama and granted an audience at long last, he requested Yama to answer his query as to the mystery of death. Baffled at his request, Yama offered Nachiketa any material things of his desire in the world, but entreated him not to persist with his query as to the mystery of death. Not being able to persuade Nachiketa, not being able to induce him with all the temptations of the world, Yama finally acceded to Nachiketa’s request to enlighten him as to the mystery of death. Having narrated this or having illustrated with reference to Nachiketa what genuine faith and confidence in one’s own self meant, Swamiji observed:

What we want is this Shraddha. Unfortunately, it has nearly vanished from India, and this is why we are in our present state. What makes the difference between man and man is the difference in this Shraddha and nothing else. What makes one man great and another weak and low is this Shraddha. My Master used to say, he who thinks himself weak will become weak, and that is true. This Shraddha must enter into you.\(^{81}\)

Swamiji went on to observe that if the Western nations became great in material powers, that was the result of their Shraddha, their belief in themselves. But then there was one difference between the West and India. The West believed in muscles, while India believed in spirit. The only thing that India needed was to put this belief in infinitely powerful spirit into practical works. Swamiji put this point as to the belief in the
Atman and its practical use through Vedantic approach in the following words:

Believe in that infinite soul, the infinite power, which with consensus of opinion, your books and sages preach. That Atman which nothing can destroy, in It is infinite power waiting to be called out. For here is the great difference between all other philosophies and the Indian philosophy. Whether dualistic, qualified monistic, monistic, they all firmly believe that everything is in the soul itself; it has only to come out and manifest itself.  

Having emphasized to no end the importance of Shraddha or faith in the self that all human beings needed as the first requisite to elevate themselves into their true mettle as human beings, Swamiji went on to warn Indians against “the awful disease that is creeping into our national blood, that idea of ridiculing everything, that loss of seriousness. Give that up. Be strong and have this Shraddha, and everything else is bound to follow”. That Shraddha and strength went hand in hand is a proposition that Swamiji illustrated best at Lahore with the example of Guru Govind Singh. To quote him:

Driven out from this country, fighting against its oppression, after having shed his own blood for the defence of the Hindu religion, after having seen his children killed on the battlefield – ay, this example of the great Guru, left even by those for whose sake he was shedding his blood and the blood of his own nearest and dearest – he, the wounded lion, retired from the field calmly to die in the South, but not a word of curse escaped his lips against those who had ungratefully forsaken him! Mark me; every one of you will have to be a Govind Singh (emphases added), if you want to do good to your country.
Swamiji eulogized not only the Shraddha, strength, and sacrifice of Guru Govind Singh but also his great quality of forgiveness and his virtue of worshipping his countrymen as his first Gods. As Swamiji said, addressing his audience at Lahore:

They [one’s countrymen] are the first Gods you will have to worship even if they do everything to hurt you. … If they drive you out, retire to die in silence like that mighty lion, Govind Singh.85

One could very well see for oneself that Swamiji was holding up the ideal of Guru Govind Singh as an example of the kind of Manliness approach that he wanted Indians to use in life and its challenges.

X

Swamiji put forth some propositions through his Vedantic and Manliness approaches.

His first proposition was that man must have always faith in himself. He must remember his real nature that he is Atman living in body and that infinite power, purity and holiness are all lodged in himself and that he must bring them out or manifest them in all movements in all spheres of life.

His second proposition was that man must be always strong. He is That. There is nothing over and above him. So, why should he ever be weak?

His third proposition was that man must be always fearless. He, the Infinite Atman, alone exists in the world. So, why should he ever be fearful of anybody or of anything?

Having combined these three propositions, Swamiji exhorted Indians to stand always on their own feet and march always ahead in life. In order that Indians make true men of themselves, Swamiji exhorted them
to desist from evils such as fault-finding and quarrelling. He was particularly critical of quarrelling over religions. Indeed, he was never tried of stressing before Indians as also before the rest of humanity in the world that “there is but one eternal religion, and that is the perception of the divine within, and the rest is mere forth”\(^8\) Swamiji meant to say that the core of religion lay in the spirituality of oneness. Our scriptures say, “That which exists is One, sages call It (Him) by various names”. This means that Advaita is the essence of men and things and that differentiation is only apparent. Therefore, in a country like India, a country with such a grand inheritance, quarrelling over religions was “a shame”\(^7\) and that it could not but jeopardize India’s tradition as also her strength. Always asserting the Indian tradition to this effect also that in India man is a soul and spirit first and a body only next,\(^8\) (the Western tradition is the other way round), Swamiji made the following telling observation as to why India must hold on to her spiritual tradition and as to why every Indian must do everything to uphold the national tradition of spirituality:

All the tortures and miseries of the world will pass over without hurting us, … so long as we hold on to this grandest of all our inheritances, spirituality. … In other countries a man may be political first, and then he may have a little religion, but here in India first and foremost duty of our lives is to be spiritual first, and then, if there is time, let other things come. Bearing this in mind we shall be in a better position to understand why, for our national welfare, we must first seek out at the present day all the spiritual forces of the race, as was done in days of yore and will be done in all times to come. National union in India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces. A nation in India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune.\(^9\)

Swamiji’s stipulation regarding spirituality to this effect that the hearts of all Indians must beat to the same spiritual tune did not exclude
the existence of different sects in India with their different forms of worship. It made full allowance for them, asking the sects only to understand this that, after all, they all directed their worship to the same Atman or divine in man, and that, therefore, there was no real point in their quarrels over religion and that in any case the world or the man could not be any better by sectarianism or the sectarian approach to religion.

As Swamiji considered religion to be essential for the development of man, he wanted to do two things with it. First, he wanted to bring man in India gradually from the religion of externalities to the religion of spirituality by investing man with the perception that whether Hindu or Muslim or Buddhist or Jain or Shikh or Christian, human beings are all one in the perception of the divinity of their beings. By impressing upon man the religion of the divinity of his being and by directing his religious energy to the service of fellow-man as God, Swamiji made religion dynamic. He brought religion into the life of everybody and made it a tool as well to the task of regeneration of India. Thus, Swamiji made religion serve the two-fold purpose in India: regenerating man and regenerating the nation. That such was the purpose of Swamiji’s came out neatly in the following statement of his:

Let them talk of India’s regeneration as they like. Let me tell you as one who has been working – at least trying to work – all his life, that there is no regeneration for India until you be spiritual.

What Swamiji said in elaboration of the above proposition deserves to be quoted in full:

Religion, the common inheritance, the universal birthright of the race, must be brought free to the door of everybody. Religion in India must be made as free and as easy of access as is God’s air. And this is the kind of work we have to bring about in India, but not by getting up little sects and
fighting on points of difference. Let us preach where we all agree and leave the differences to remedy themselves. As I have said to the Indian people again and again, if there is the darkness of centuries in a room and we go into the room and begin to cry, “Oh, it is dark, it is dark!” will the darkness go? Bring in the light and the darkness will vanish at once. This is the secret of reforming men. Suggest to them higher things; believe in man first. Why start with the belief that man is degraded and degenerated? … Have faith in man first, and then having faith in him, believe that if there are defects in him, if he makes mistakes, if he embraces the crudest and the vilest doctrines, believe that it is not from his real nature that they come, but from the want of higher ideals. If a man goes towards what is false, it is because he cannot get what is true. Therefore the only method of correcting what is false is by supplying him with what is true. … and, mark my words, if you have really given him the truth, the false must vanish, light must dispel darkness, and truth will bring the good out. This is the way if you want to reform the country spiritually; this is the way, and not fighting, not even telling people that what they are doing is bad. Put the good before them, see how eagerly they take it, see how the divine that never dies, that is always living in the human, comes up awakened and stretches out its hand for all that is good, and all that is glorious.

In brief, Swamiji’s massage is that if the man in India, being charged with spirituality or being equipped with Vedantic and Manliness approaches, works out his own regeneration as also the regeneration of fellow Indians, the end result of such approaches will be the positive development of every individual Indian as also the positive development of India as a nation. The implication of this message of Swamiji’s is that the regeneration of themselves as also of India must be brought about by the Indians themselves and the more the Indians are conscious of their real nature as human beings, the better they can work towards this end.
India must regenerate herself basically by her own efforts. The Indians must do it mainly by themselves, but should India accept any help or co-operation from the West and if so, under what conditions?

Swamiji’s unhesitating answer to this question is that we must accept whatever scientific acumen and industrial know-how the West could offer to us, but we must do this only on the basis of exchange and equality. As Swamiji put it:

We must go out, exchange our spirituality for anything they [the West] have to give us; for the marvels of region of spirit we will exchange the marvels of the region of matter. We will not be students always, but teachers also. There cannot be friendship without equality and there cannot be equality when one party is always the teacher and the other party sits always at his feet. If you want to be come equal with the Englishman or the American, you will have to teach as well as to learn and you have plenty yet to teach to the world for centuries to come. This has to be done. Fire and enthusiasm must be in our blood.

Elsewhere, Swamiji observed in the same vein that “This must be our eternal foreign policy, preaching the truths of our Shastras to the nations of the world.” Swamiji was astute enough to observe that our gains in our exchange policy would not be only economic but even more profoundly political. As he quipped to his Calcutta audience: “I ask you who are politically minded, do you require any other proof that this will unite us as a race? This very assembly is a sufficient witness.”

Exchange or give and take on the basis of equality always, but imitation never, cautioned Swamiji, for reasons as quoted below:
Imitation, cowardly imitation, never makes for progress. It is verily the sign of awful degradation in a man. When a man has begun to hate himself, then the last blow has come. When a man has begun to be ashamed of his ancestors, the end has come. …Therefore, have faith in yourselves; be proud of your ancestors, instead of being ashamed of them. And do not imitate, do not imitate! … Learn everything that is good from others, but bring it in, and in your own way absorb it; do not become others. Do not be dragged away out of this Indian life; do not for a moment think that it would be better for India if all the Indians dressed, ate and behaved like another race. … Therefore, make way for the life-current of the nation. Take away the blocks that bar the progress of this mighty river, cleanse its path, clear the channel, and out it will rush by its own natural impulse, and the nation will go on careering and progressing.

The observations as quoted above: ‘Take away the blocks that bar the progress of the mighty river’ and ‘make way for the life-current of the nation’ lead us to a discussion of a very important aspect of Swamiji’s doctrine of Atman upon which indeed is based his Vedantic and Manliness approaches.

The aspect we are referring to is Swamiji’s assertion, based, of course, on his doctrine of Atman, that all evolution represents the fullest development of the involution. Swamiji bases this evolution-involution thesis on Patanjali’s exposition as to “the infilling of nature”, and having included it in his doctrine of Atman or in his Vedantic and Manliness approaches, he presents it in the following words:

We admit that the amoeba goes higher and higher until it becomes a Buddha; we admit that, but we are at the same time as much certain that you
cannot get an amount of work out of a machine unless you have put it in some shape or other. … If the Buddha is the evolved amoeba, the amoeba was the involved Buddha also. If this universe is the manifestation of an almost infinite amount of energy, when this universe was in a state of Pralaya, it must have represented the same amount of involved energy. It cannot have been otherwise. As such, it follows that every soul is infinite. From the lowest worm that crawls under our feet to the noblest and greatest saints, all have this infinite power, infinite purity and infinite everything. Only the difference is in the degree of manifestation. The worm is only manifesting just a little bit of that energy, you have manifested more, another god-man has manifested still more: that is all the difference. But that infinite power is there all the same. Says Patanjali: … “Like the peasant irrigating his field”. Through a little corner of his field he brings water from a reservoir somewhere and perhaps he has got a little lock that prevents the water from rushing into his field. When he wants water, he has simply to open the lock, and in rushes the water of its own power. The power has not to be added, it is already there in the reservoir. So everyone of us, every being, has as its own background such a reservoir of strength, infinite power, infinite purity, infinite bliss, and existence infinite – only these locks, these bodies, are hindering us from expressing what we really are to the fullest. The message that follows from the above assertion of Swamiji’s is that the Indians must remove the blocks that prevent them from expressing what they really are to the fullest. In this assertion lies the key to the development of man in India as also the key to the development of nation that is India. But then India’s stumbling blocks are: first, the mental blocks of men in India and secondly, the material blocks that arise from poverty and ignorance of the nation. Can the Advaita-based Vedantic and Manliness approaches remove these blocks? Is Advaita, so to say, applicable at all on the material plane?
Swamiji answers the question, as posed above, in the firm affirmative. The secret of Advaita is: ‘Believe in yourself’. In the history of each nation we find that only those individuals became great and strong who believed in themselves. Robert Clive, who came to India a mere clerk, became the founder of the mighty British Empire in India because he believed that he was born to do great things. Therefore, the first thing in Advaita or in the Vedantic approach is the belief that the infinite Brahman is our magazine of power and strength, and we can draw [upon it] as much as we like”.  

The second thing is to work out the Advaita manfully on the practical plane. Here comes in what Swamiji calls the Manliness approach. According to this approach, he who wants material wealth has to work hard till the material wealth comes to him; and he who wants knowledge, has to work hard till the ignorance goes away and knowledge comes to him. One bane of India was that Advaita was for ages confined to the spiritual plane only. Swamiji brought it down to the daily, every day life of the people. As Swamiji himself enjoined, “it [the Advaita] shall be worked out in the place of the king, in the cave of the recluse, it shall be worked out in the cottage of the poor, by the beggar in the street, everywhere; anywhere it can be worked out”. 

It is only by working out the Advaita though the Manliness approach that the firm foundation to the life of man as also to the building of nation can be provided in India. As Swamiji said, “Arise and awake and be perfectly sincere.” That is the only mantra for the rising up of Indians and of the country that was India. “What we want is character, that steadiness and character that make a man cling on to a thing like grim death”.  

Having grim determination and character, the next thing that the Indians needed to do was to extend a helping hand to others so that the sinking millions of India could be raised through the practical work done for them. As Swamiji so beautifully and so feelingly put it:
What we want is not so much spirituality as a little of the bringing down of the Advaita into the material world (Emphases added). First bread and then religion. We stuff them too much with religion when the poor fellows have been starving. No dogmas will satisfy the poor cravings of hunger. There are two curses here: first our weakness, secondly, our hatred, our dried-up hearts. You may talk doctrines by the millions, you may have sects by the hundreds of millions; ay, but it is nothing until you have the heart to feel. Feel for them as your Veda teaches you, till you find they are parts of your own bodies, till you realise that you and they, the poor and the rich, the saint and the sinner, are all parts of One Infinite Whole, which you call Brahman.102

XIII

It follows from the above discussion that Swamiji’s final message in terms of the development of man as also the building of the nation in India was : to stand up, to be bold, to work out the Vedanta in every field of life, to bring Advaita down from the spiritual plane into the material world for the sake of the sinking millions of India and to extend a helping hand to them with a feeling heart. His life was an epitome of all these qualities and he asserted that these qualities marked the Vedantic and Manliness approaches that he championed towards the development to man in India.

Swami Vivekananda led by personal examples. Thus, only a man of Vivekananda’s boldness, finding resistance from some of his own brother-disciples to his introduction of a new concept of religion as service to humanity as also to his introduction of a new type of Sannyasins given to working for the raising up or development of humanity, could blurt out:

Who cares for your Bhakti and Mukti? Who cares for what the scriptures say? I will go to hell cheerfully a thousand times, if I can rouse my countrymen, immersed in Tamas (inertia), and make them stand on their own feet and be Men inspired with the spirit of Karma-Yoga. I am
Swami Vivekananda not only resisted the ‘resistance’ or overcame the mental blocks of some of his brother-monks but was able to infuse in them the spirit of selfless service to humanity as the extended ideal of Sannyasa to them. Under his inspiration, Swami Akhandananda took to feeding and nursing the sufferers from famine at Murshidabad in Bengal and Swami Trigunatitananda followed the suit in opening a famine-relief centre at Dinajpur. Gradually, other centres were established at Deoghar, Dakshineswar and Calcutta. And an elated Vivekananda wrote to Mary Hale on July 9, 1897:

Only one idea was burning in my brain – to start the machine for elevating the Indian masses, and that I have succeeded in doing to a certain extent. It would have made your heart glad to see how my boys are working in the midst of famine and disease and misery – nursing by the mat-bed of the cholera-stricken Pariah and feeding the starving Chandala …. What! I, who have realized the Spirit, and the vanity of all earthly nonsense, to be swerved from my path by babies’ [that is, immature critics’] prattle? Do I look like that? …. I feel my task is done – at most three or four years of my life are left. I have lost all wish for my personal salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments. I must see my machine in working order, and then knowing for sure that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep, without caring what will be next.¹⁰⁴

Having written thus, he next wrote those lines which represent the acme of his doctrine of service and his depth of feelings for humanity:
And may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls — and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.\textsuperscript{104a}

Calcutta saw an outstanding example of Vivekananda’s practical application of Vedanta at a time of human need when plague broke out in the city in an epidemic form in March, 1899. Vivekananda worked this time through his English disciple Margaret Elizabeth Noble who was initiated as a novice of the order of Ramakrishna on March 25, 1898. Miss Noble was given the name ‘Nivedita’ (The Dedicated) and made a “Naisthic” Brahmacharini of the Order a year later. How did Swamiji, her Master, prepare her for the work she was called upon to do? Let us hear from Nivedita herself:

Never complain, he had said, of not having enough time for prayer and meditation. Your mission and your achievement lie in your work. That is the goal to which I am leading you. You must unite within yourself the practical spirit and culture of the perfect citizen, with love of poverty, purity and complete abandonment of self. These are the conditions under which your faith will blossom….Follow me. March with me. \textit{My mission is not ... anything but simply to bring manhood to these people}.\textsuperscript{105} (Emphases added).

Swamiji said in continuation and with reference to the bubonic plague ravaging the Baghbazar area of Calcutta, “We must save the district. It is for you to do this.”\textsuperscript{106} And responding to her Master’s call of working out what he called Practical Vedanta, Nivedita, writes her biographer:
Fought an implacable war. She went through the stricken localities, making inquiries, prepared lists of vacant beds; opened a provisional dispensary in a wooden shed; organised groups of voluntary workers under the direction of Swami Sadananda. Her campaign was pursued so vigorously that the Government Health Officer, with his inspectors, came to see her.\footnote{107}

“Sympathy for the poor, the downtrodden even unto death — this is our motto”,\footnote{108} said Swami Vivekananda. Nivedita made every word of that motto true in her plague work,\footnote{109} understanding in the process that her Master sympathized with the poor and the downtrodden not just for the sake of it. He had a larger, indeed an ultimate purpose behind it. That purpose was the empowerment or the raising of these people into manliness. Indeed, manliness constituted, for Swami Vivekananda, the essence of religion. As he said, “Why, all that can be said in religion can be counted on a few fingers! It is \textit{man} that results, that grows out of it. Salvation is nothing except a motive. It is the \textit{man} they form that is everything.”\footnote{110}

Swami Vivekananda wanted all men, particularly his disciples, to be \textit{all-round men} by combining in their lives idealism and practicality. As he said in an address given to the junior sannyasins of the Belur Math on June 19, 1899:

First, we have to understand that we must not have any impossible ideal. An ideal which is too high makes a nation weak and degraded … On the other hand, too much practicality is also wrong. … If you have no ideal to guide you, you are simply a brute. So we must not lower our ideal, neither are we to lose sight of practicality. We must avoid the extremes. In our country, the old idea is to sit in a cave and meditate and die. To go ahead of others in salvation is wrong. One must learn sooner or later that one cannot get salvation if one does not try to seek the salvation of his brothers. You must try to combine in your
life immense idealism with immense practicality. You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now, and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate these fields. (Swamiji said, pointing to the meadows of the Math).  

An all-round man of Swamiji’s conception, as we have seen above, must combine being and doing, making a judicious combination in life of idealism and practicality. And an all-round man becomes a complete man when he has that faith in himself that calls out the inner divinity and tells him that he can do anything. To quote Swamiji:

You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man loses faith in himself, death comes. Believe first in yourself and then in God. A handful of strong men will move the world. We need a heart to feel, a brain to conceive, and a strong arm to do the work.

In Swamiji’s perception an all-round man becomes a complete man when having made a judicious combination of idealism and practicality he brings about in his life a judicious combination as well of his head, heart, and hand. Conceiving Oneness (of humanity) with his head, showing faith in Self with his heart and exhibiting strength with his hand, he applies the combination of these to the service of his fellow-beings and thereby achieves his own fulfilment in the fulfilment of others. Such is Swamiji’s conception of complete man and of the goal of complete manliness to which he wanted to raise every man and woman in India through his Vedantic and Manliness approaches and by such raising of individual men and women, he wanted to achieve the raising of India as a nation as well.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Swamiji left London for India by ship on December 16, 1896. The ship reached Naples on December 30, 1896 and was due to reach Colombo on January 15, 1897.

1a Here the Raja of Ramnad himself drew the carriage of Swamiji, with the help of other dignitaries who accompanied him. Needless to say that the horses were unhitched in the process.


2a In continuation of his thesis on the service of humanity as Shiva, Swamiji gave a most beautiful definition of spirituality by saying that unselfishness was indeed the test of spirituality. The more unselfish a man was the more spiritual he was. See *Ibid.*, p. 143.

3 Swamiji did this at Paramakudi which he visited next to Pamban.


22. The reference is to Pratapchandra Mazumdar of the Brahmo Samaj. His attempts to injure Swamiji’s reputation by spreading calumnies
against him in America and India have been mentioned in the previous chapter. For the quote, see *ibid.*, p. 210.

29. Swamiji regretted that the two higher castes of India reduced the rest of the people of India - the masses, as he called them, to sub-human existence. See *ibid.*, p. 216.
40.*Ibid.*
45. Delivered on the evening of February 13, 1897 at Madras.
49.*Ibid.*
51. Ibid., p. 244.
51a Ibid.
52. Ibid., p. 245.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., p. 246.
56. Ibid., p. 278.
56a Ibid.
57. Ibid., p. 284.
58. Ibid.
60. Ibid., p. 289.
61. “Sanskrit and prestige go together in India”, observed Swamiji. Ibid., p. 299.
62. How prophetic are the words of Swami Vivekananda and how sage-like he anticipated the problem of the creamy layers of the lower or backward castes in India of the recent times who, it is alleged, having been raised, neglect the brethren of their own castes.
63. Ibid., p. 291.
64. Ibid., p. 297.
65. Ibid., p. 298.
66. Ibid., p. 293.
67. Ibid., p. 295.
68. Ibid., p. 296.
69. Ibid., p. 292.
70. Ibid., p. 293.
71. Ibid., p. 301.
72. Ibid., p. 302.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., p. 299.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., p. 301.
77. Ibid., pp. 303-304.
78. Swami Vivekananda arrived at Calcutta from Madras on February 19, 1897 and he was given a public reception at Sobhabazar Rajbari (the palatial residence of the late Raja Sir Radhakanta Deb) on February 28, 1897. In response to the address of welcome presented to him on the occasion, Swamiji uttered the words as quoted herein.


90. Swamiji “did not condemn any form of worship, but what he went to say was that the highest form and the most necessary at present in India was this form of Narayana worship.” See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 3, p. 391.

It bears saying here that Swamiji had difficulty even in impressing his own brother-monks about his new conception of religion as the worship of God through the service of men. Used to worshipping God through prayer and meditation in solitude, some of them, Swami Yogananda and Swami Adbhutananda, for example, thought that Vivekananda was misinterpreting religion and that he was deviating from the path of Shri Ramakrishna to which Swamiji gave the spirited reply that Shri Ramakrishna “is the embodiment of infinite spiritual ideas capable of development in infinite ways. One gracious glance of his eyes can create a hundred thousand Vivekanandas at this instant! But if this time he chooses, instead, to work through me, making me his instrument, I can only bow to his will.” See *The Life*, Vol. 2, p. 250.


93. Swamiji was unhesitatingly of the opinion that closing ourselves within the shell and refusing to go out and compare notes with other nations has historically been the cause of our downfall as a nation. The process of opening up started with Raja Rammohun Roy and no doubt, reached its climax in pre-independent India with Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji was undoubtedly the pioneer of modern India in terms of what is called in modern times as people-to-people contact between nations or what is called in international relations as Track-II diplomacy.


97. A favourite example of Swamiji was that of seed put into the ground and growing into a tree, taking the help of earth, air and water but becoming none of these and growing instead into a tree, after its own nature. “Let that be your position”, said Swamiji. See *Ibid.*, p. 381.


the low, the poor, the miserable! Those who are the backbone of
the nation, whose labour produces food, those whose one day’s
absence from work raises a cry of general distress in the city -
where is the man in our country who sympathizes with them, who
shares in their joys and sorrows?” Quoted in Swami Nikhilananda,
*op. cit.*, pp. 328-329. Indeed, it is the prospect of improving the lot
of these people by putting into practice the ideal of equality and
doing away with the inequality of privileges for upper classes of
people that made Swamiji attracted towards the ideology of
socialism. However, for him, without spiritual foundation given to
the character of people no system could survive and that included a
system based basically on the economic motive and ideal. That is
why he said that he was attracted towards socialism not because it
was a perfect system but because half a loaf was better than no loaf.
Vivekananda was firmly of the opinion that the poor, the
downtrodden had to be elevated and developed into manhood first
if India were to be developed at all.

109. For details of Nivedita’s plague work and other aspects as well of
Nivedita’s thought and work in India, see Mamata Ray and Anil
Baran Ray, *India and ‘The Dedicated’*, Manuscript India, 2003,
especially pp. 176-196.


112. Quoted in Nikhilananda, p. 287.
