CHAPTER- VI
CONCLUSION

Vivekananda was the traveller who moved freely with a broad open mind in two great worlds, east and west, past and present without being a prisoner of age or race. He rejected to have a living in a windowless, blocked world, dead pool of stagnation, or did hesitate to accept any established custom and creed handed from the past. Vivekananda did not relate himself to the broken pillars of past, rather he came forward and boldly faced the problems of age and changing society. He echoed the voice of the ancient wisdom of motherland highlighting the very spirit of Universal Humanity. Though respectful to ancient tradition, his mind was open to all ideas, whatever these sources might be. His eyes were always set on the horizon beyond the narrow frontier of race and colour, and the world yet to be born. His love and devotion towards his motherland, and bold intrinsic conviction of Indian greatness did not give rise in him any spirit of racial superiority or pride, blind chauvinism and dream of worthless complex.

Stressing the realization of the fundamental unity of the world and spiritual reality existent in it, Vivekananda puts that such idea removes the spirit of separate existence from thought and expresses the broad range of spirit. And such a spiritual understanding possesses its effect on life and society. It allows an experience of the vastness of being, richness of life and wide approach of unity and expresses the secret of an ideal harmony behind the apparent divided notion
of life. This understanding or this knowledge of our being as the spirit universal, is spirituality. Whenever the spiritual is attained man is reawakened, he transcends ego-frontier and breaks all walls of space and time. And he, in greater consciousness, finds his own being. We look inward and enhance a sense of an approach towards life through such spiritual practice.

Vivekananda consisted of that rare historical insight and approach as that of the great predecessor- Rammohan Roy or his equally great contemporary Rabindranath Tagore with a view to studying the underlying laws that govern modern Indian society- its spiritual motive and dominating note of universalism along with its contradictory powers giving rise to the spirit of isolation and narrow, sectarian, myopic outlook, the creeping disease weakening and eating its vitals. Vivekananda expressed that India possessed a mission for the world; the ancient sages and seers, poets and philosophers, creative men and artists made sacrifice of their lives with a view to serving the cause not of a country or race but of the entire humanity.

Vivekananda was very much aware of divinity of every soul and the price of individual freedom. He never permitted himself to disaffirm his integrity and follow any path blindly without revealing doubts and questioning nor did he want others to follow him blindly. Vivekananda, a rebel soul, proceeded with a broad open mind acknowledging no dogmatic belief or creed but a free pilgrim prescribing no particular doctrine or religious belief over the mass of humanity.

He wanted mankind to be liberated from the influence of all sorts of bondage-social, mental and spiritual, to attain the supreme goal of mankind. In
this regard, Vivekananda said that there are so many ideals where one possesses no right to say what shall be other’s ideal, to force one’s ideal on other. One’s duty should be to lay before other all the ideals one knows of and enable other to see by their own constitution what other likes best and which is most fitted to other. One should take up that one which suits him best and persevere in it. This is one’s Swadharma.

Vivekananda advocated ‘true individualism’. True individuality, according to Vivekananda, is rooted in universality. The finite individual has been depicted on the rock of true individuality which does not ignore universality. Each and every people will have to attain this universality by process of assimilation and reconciliation and not by exclusion and negation.

The essence of religion, according to Vivekananda, lies in spiritual realization and not in external affairs nor doctrinal affirmation. He, for quest of perfect freedom, proceeds ahead of all contemporary teachers "… avoid everyone”, he tells us, “however great and good he may be, who asks you to believe blindly. It is healthier for the individual or the race to remain wicked than to be made apparently good by such morbid extraneous control…. Beware of everything that takes away your freedom.”

Every man to Vivekananda carries the flame of freedom, i.e., the universal atman within. We should not blindly submit to and get afraid of any external power. We may draw a reference from the Vedanta: “Thou art that”. “And the universe with its myriad of suns with one voice repeats the word: Thou art that!”. Spiritual freedom is the core in
Vivekananda’s philosophy. We are to manifest latent spirituality or divinity within the process of self-evolution or transformation and reach the highest goal, recover the lost unity or realize that we essentially are one and universal. Here, we get the impact of Vivekananda’s concept of universal religion upon the contemporary world of religions. In his religious ideas, we see the exposition that the Spirit is universal, the essence of all faiths is universalism. As spiritual freedom separates mankind from the temporary and emotional relation sprung out of the ego and encourages man to soar above the changing objective world to be in the calmness of self-centred subjectivity, so universal love and compassion expand the narrow limit of the individual ego till it embraces the totality of the universe. In the fullness of spiritual being the seer sees his spirit in all and all in one spirit. Sankara commenting on the Mundaka Upanishad text (2.III, 2-1) says: “He who has reached the all penetrating Atman, enters into the all.” Vivekananda reached the same sentiments and said that he may worship the only God that exists, the God he believes in the sum total of all souls.

Religious or spiritual awareness gets end in the fullness of the universality of spirit. The individual ego like a salt doll melts in the infinite ocean. Vivekananda after so much tapasya said to a disciple before his final departure from the world that he knew the highest truth is this: ‘He is present in every being! These are all the manifold forms of Him. There is no other God to seek for! He alone is worshipping God, who serves all being!’

Thus the very essence of religion is advocated by Vivekananda who made his journey in and out and fought with his razor edged wit and intellect and took
resort to tremendous sadhana to detect this naked truth through his notion of universal religion. Harmonisation of all beliefs, nay, the Equality of all men, all are worshiping the same God has been upheld. Vivekananda called upon mankind to have courage and moral conviction to soar above our narrow ego frontier to realize this vast notion. Vivekananda said that if the major part of the men and women in this world, simply sit down and realize that they are all one, and that they are all manifestation of the one living Deity, the whole world will be changed immediately. Instead of throwing tremendous bomb-shells of hatred into every corner, instead of projecting currents of jealousy and evil thought in every part of the world, people will start thinking that they are all creation of the same God.

Vivekananda wanted through his concept of universal religion to break down all barriers, chains of servitude along with the message that the manifestation of perfection is already in man so that man can live in a free environment. According to him, each and every man should make an attempt to transform this world to a veritable ground, fit habitation for one great human family free from race and class, mutual conflict and hatred. Everybody should think over to wash away the blood that has been pouring from the human heart for centuries in different parts of this much tormented and anguished world and march toward that beautiful city built on the soil of love and compassion, where citizens are free and enlightened, drinking together from one universal spiritual fountain.
Vivekananda today is known more for his superb social reforms and religious preachings. He showed that a truly universal religion can, even today, bring the whole world closer and unite all men into a unit as its aim is to infuse the spirit of oneness. Vivekananda asserts that true religion has its roots in all the inner elements of mankind. That is why he uses the word ‘spiritual’ to mean the universal character of religion. It is fact that the use of the word ‘spiritual’ at once causes reactions of disapproval as usually it is felt that the word ‘spiritual’ is somewhat mysterious. In using the words ‘spiritual’ or ‘spiritualisation’ in the religious context, Vivekananda means to suggest that these terms denote an inner feeling of oneness. This feeling may possess a metaphysical content, but that does not make it mysterious. In the religious context, this feeling is an innocent feeling which views every fellow creature with love. One account of such a feeling is that every person realizes the essential bond of unity that binds every being. This, according to Vivekananda, forms the religious sense. This sense that is underlying each and every religious tradition is the central message of the universal religion by Vivekananda.

The concept of universal religion advocated by Vivekananda was unique. He said that by the study of different religions, we find that in essence they are one. For a sceptic, it seemed for a time that he must give up aspiration of religion. But fortunately for him, Vivekananda said that the sceptic studied Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and other religions of the world, and to his surprise, realized that the same basic principles taught by his religion were also taught by other religions.
The concept of religion put forward by Vivekananda is nothing but ‘humanism’ embracing all religions of the world. He preached this great principle emphasizing the selflessness of the individual. He insisted on each and every person acquiring character, integrity and truth, the necessity of pursuing selfless service. He rightly put that the primary effort was to enhance personal character and if personal character was enhanced, the character of the nation as a whole would automatically be built up. This is a lesson that we must remember every day of our lives. All our talk of establishing society free from exploitation and want will be a mirage if we in our individual lives, whatever our position is and whatever our status be, do not adhere to certain fundamental values and norms that should guide our action and thought.

Vivekananda thus gives emphasis on the realization of divinity latent in each and every man. He, therefore, wanted acceptance and respect to religions, modes and methods as pathways leading to the same goal. He accepted all religions that were in the past and served them all with the same intensity and sincerity. Vivekananda believed as much in Humanism as in Christianity or Islam or Buddhism. To him, all religions laid themselves on the same foundations of charity, truth and tolerance. Vivekananda’s establishment of the Ramakrishna Mission was one of his greatest gifts to the Nation and to the world. The Ramakrishna Mission which he founded has always kept before it the ideal of social and national service. The inmates of the Mission have always rushed to the rescue of the victims of national calamities. Vivekananda’s phrase ‘Daridra
Narayan’ (the Divine in the form of the poor) became the symbol of active service to the poor and the down-trodden.

Vivekananda’s message has been of great impact and relevance especially to the modern minds when they are on the way to destiny. With such a great message still many anti-social elements, narrow and divisive forces that want to discourage not merely the underlying unity but cut at the very root of our great cultural heritage are discouraged. It should become a resolve for all men to fight these forces and retain in the hearts the significant and valuable message of all pervading humanism of Vivekananda.

It is followed that religion has been taught by Vivekananda not as being in a water-tight compartment. Rather he regarded religion as co-extensive with life and wanted it to influence the social and economic ideals of the people and their daily conduct and activity.

Vivekananda named his religion “Practical Vedanta”. It is seen that this “Practical Vedanta” appears in its detailed exposition, as far as social relations and individual conduct were concerned to possess a very near similarity to the preaching in the name of socialism. Of course, we see a lot of differences in motivation and methodology of implementation between “Practical Vedanta” and socialism. But “Practical Vedanta” possesses a lot in common with some varieties of socialism like democratic socialism and Gandhian socialism. Really viewing, Gandhian socialism receives a lot from Vivekananda’s “Practical Vedanta”. It is, therefore, that one should attempt at giving the title of Vedantic
socialism to the “Practical Vedanta” which Vivekananda was preaching as
concrete and behavioural version of the Vedanta of ancient Indian origin.

Vivekananda’s thinking of universality of religion has been an influential
factor towards the world minds as he bears a very practical Vedantic motion as to
human and religion. Its reflection we may get in his declaration: “I do not believe
in a God or religion which cannot wipe widow’s tears or bring a piece of bread to
the orphan’s mouth. Where should you go to seek God? Are not all poor, the
miserable, the weak, Gods? Why not worship them first? I believe in God and I
believe in man. I believe in helping the miserable. I believe even in going to hell
to save others”. He spent most of life time on this earth seeing missionaries who
would fight as soldiers for the abolition of poverty of the people and for the
service of the daridra narayan as their way of worship of God. A lot of decades
have passed since Vivekananda gave this message to the nation, and it sounds
even more relevant today.

Vivekananda was essentially a believer in evolution, using the best from
the past to change the present, though he was also prepared to give hard knocks
to the present to make it get rid of the unwholesome part of its heritage.
Vivekananda always carried against the Indian habit of neglecting essentials in
favour of external ceremonial in practice of their religion. He said that the
universal aspect of God means this world, and worshipping it means serving it;
not indulging in ceremonials. If one wants any good to come, one should just
have to throw one’s ceremonials overboard and worship the living God, the Man-
God—every being that bears a human form—God in universal as well as individual aspect.

Thus, Vivekananda wanted to divert religion from its negative and sensuous aspect of ceremonial service of a personal God in idol form to the positive and rational aspect of ceremonial serving the human being in want and in distress. And he came to end with the article on “Modern India” to the udbodhana of March, 1899 with these ringing words: “Forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers.”

Such expositions made by Vivekananda have surely been of high relevance towards the world people, contemporary as well as modern. The essential search in respect of every religion is to establish righteousness amongst unrighteousness. Religion and righteousness, we have seen to have always been related with each other. Religion to Vivekananda, can never be divorced from righteousness or truth.

Vivekananda embraces “Religion of the Upanisad” as the all embracing creative one to make awakening of the Divinity already in Nature. Religion for him is nothing but Vedanta which throughout his life he attempted to establish as a unity of all the faiths of the whole world. There lies beautiful solution of every problem, national and international in Vivekananda’s philosophy of the awakening of same divinity already existent in every soul from within. Such a message will
surely pave the way for world harmony among the world community for a
peaceful and meaningful living as human beings.

In Vivekananda, we have seen religion as belonging to the supersensuous
plane. Religion, which is beyond all reasoning, is not possible in the sense plane.
His ideas of morality, socialism, practical-vedanta, individual freedom and
education are nurtured in his supernaturalism in various ways. This is the impact
of his deep belief in the “direct experience of the spirit” which he received from
his spiritual Guru Sri Ramakrishna. The ‘Monistic’ trend that we find in Vedanta
becomes the means to realize the end of religious pursuit of truth. Religion is a
vision and inspiration of the Reality. Vivekananda puts that religion is religion of
the spirit in nature. His agreement that Vedanta philosophy consists in realization
may be regarded as the best gift that he presents to the whole world. The impact
and relevance of such thinking of Vivekananda seemed to be an important issue
for discussion both in contemporary and in modern religious thinking as this
yields religion its very substance. Realization denotes that every truth should be
justified by human beings with the help of reason. The realization of the Atman
as the spirit may be called the secret of his Vedanta philosophy which seems very
much practical in case of awaking the spirit of unity among mankind of the
world. For him, Hindu philosophy and religion are so wide and liberal that it can
embrace every idea of God and human spirituality. Vivekananda in similar voice
with the classical thinkers reconciles philosophy and religion. He says that the
difference is not in kind but in degree. Every culture manifests through the
expression of the ‘Reality’. Vivekananda says that Hinduism is purely secular. It is not at all religion. He regards that the Vedas as base of Hinduism are the treasure of spiritual laws discovered by different persons. The greatest thing on earth, according to Vivekananda, is to realize the spirit.

Vivekananda has unified science with religion, i.e. he believes in no antagonism between science and religion. His religious attitude gives us an ideal of how religion can be justified by modern science. This view is a kin to Radhakrishnan’s assertion that the spirit “leads to the refinement of religion”. Even J. Nehru accepts Vivekananda’s view of culmination of traditionalism with modernism. The ‘being’ of the metaphysician and the matter of the physicist Vivekananda says, are as two non-separate entities of the one… ‘In Itself.’

Atman, according to Vivekananda, is the potency of the universe. Thus, Vivekananda’s attitude of religion may be named as supernaturalism. Vivekananda like his Guru Ramakrishna was never inspired by sectarian and orthodox Hindu religion. Vivekananda’s greatest message is to overcome the limits of the so-called “established religion or cultural tradition.” He called upon world people to study the original sources of knowledge to understand any religion. To Vivekananda, each and every creed is, in this manner, the attempt at humanity to realize the infinity of the self. Sri Aurobindo, Vivekananda and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, all endeavoured from heart to establish that the essential element of Religion is to become conscious of the spiritual divinity.

Vivekananda’s distinctive contribution is his wide acknowledgements of every corner of life. Each and every distinction of creed, culture, sex, race and
nationality can be discarded by his tremendous remarkable work, i.e., universalism in religion. We can draw here reference to the life of the Great Master of Vivekananda who could successfully put the Vedanta philosophy of ‘oneness’ into practice. Vivekananda, like an essentialist, establishes the postulate of ‘unity in diversity’ as the law of all religious progression. To Vivekananda, religion is synonymous with universalism of the spirit. The message of Vivekananda about ideal religion is the harmonious balance of four directions. This religion can be gained by ‘Yoga’. Thus Vivekananda with triumph asserts that Advaita is the religion of the future to enlighten humanity. He aimed at reaching the depth of facts than mere external perfection… otherwise religious doctrines are mere dead principles. Gandhi too put that true religion remains in the expectation to visualize the universal and all pervading spirit of Truth face to face. To Vivekananda, too, every vision of truth is a vision of God. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan like Vivekananda puts that when religion makes us spiritual, all our quarrels and conflicts are resolved. It is realization that has made the Rishis to see God face to face. For Vivekananda, the concept of God transcends the meaning of the ‘Personal God’ of the West. This is the central theme of discussion in Vivekananda’s concept of religion.

The explanation of God made by Vivekananda is found from within. Everyone is born to rediscover one’s own God nature. He says that man begins as dualist in the relation of God. As a result, God is separated from us. Love comes in between. But while every relation is dissolved by a monist, the little self
becomes one with the Infinite. Usually as an Advaitin, Vivekananda puts that hypocrisy cannot exist where God is. God is of Infinite Love and the objective of Love is sublime and infinite, According to Ramakrishna, love instead of binding man to God, it binds man to man. Colling Wood who in a sense comes very near to the Great Master asserts that love of God indicates both knowing Him and doing His will.

Man has been receiving utmost priority in Vivekananda’s religious philosophy. We possess no notion of God higher than man. That is why our God is man and man is God. The significant point on Sankara’s Advaita philosophy is that man’s intellect cannot grasp the totality of God, while each knot of his heart disappears, man realizes… That thou art (I am Brahman). Likewise Vivekananda describes that man does not conceptualize God out of his own brain. He can merely visualize God from within in the capacity of his own imagination. Vivekananda in similar voice with Sankara, puts that God exists in the heart of man… ‘the soul of our soul, the Reality in us.’ This is the explanation from metaphysical point of view about the personal God. Isvara is thus with form and without form. Like John Stuart Mill, Vivekananda too accepts that Personal God cannot be shown. Vivekananda attains Isvara as the Atman as seen by mind. The highest name is thus the ‘Om’. In God we are all one, God is merely an appearance of the Absolute for Sankara. He exists only within maya. Likewise, Vivekananda too, says that within the impersonal exists various persons beginning with the lowest atom upto the Personal God, whom we kneel down to pray. God in Vivekananda is a necessity for the common people since one can
attain the Impersonal merely by concrete forms. This is the essential necessity of every religion from the dualistic attitude. The Vedantic notion of Brahman put forward by Vivekananda as Sat-Cit-Ananda is echoed as God…. the pure spirit. To him, if man wants to be both rational and religious, Advaita is the best system in the world.

Vivekananda like Gandhi upholds that the greatest name man has given to God is truth. Rabindranath Tagore gets no difference between the Absolute and God from his aesthetic view point while realizing that he is one with God, he becomes the highest human being. Hegel, also identifies his Absolute with God. The Absolute is spiritual. There is, for Vivekananda, just one all-inclusive and self-consistence Reality. God, according to Vivekananda and Bradley, like Sankara, cannot be identified with the Absolute. Bradley regards the Absolute as timeless, eternal and possesses no progress on itself. Spinoza’s God on the other hand, is one all-inclusive influencing substance. Vivekananda here differs from Bradley as he attains that so long we are human, we must humanize God.

The maintenance of the orthodoxy of the Vedas was sustained by Sankara while Vivekananda endeavoured to make it free from the clutches of a section of the privileged. For Vivekananda, worship is talking to God which is the practical aspect of all worship. So, for Vivekananda, Reality in everyman must become the object of worship. Radhakrishnan, too, puts to this point that Truth is not truth until the seeker personally appropriates it. This is ‘subjectivity’ of truth. Religion of Vivekananda is the experience of life and personal illumination is gained through service to mankind. His humanism is based on the principle of
Advaita philosophy. His principle, i.e., service of mankind possesses ultimately a
great appeal towards all religions of the world. His famous declaration through
spiritualistic humanism which is determined by the Upanisadic dictum “so
Ham!….I am Brahman, I am Brahman”. Humanity, for Vivekananda, is
immortality. The man is immortal as parts of the whole. To Dr. S.
Radhakrishnan, true humanism represents the fact that ordinary condition of man
is not his ultimate being. Man possesses in him a deeper self which is the
significant underlying essence for every religion of the world. Vivekananda has
dedicated his whole life for a man-making religion, man-making theories and the
like which is peculiar in a sense to influence the mankind to rediscover their very
essential sameness. He showed through his concept of universal religion that
each and every people of the world is essentially same with the similar objective
of life. Though they have been observing different beliefs, customs, yet there is
uniqueness in the basic principles. He says unity in variety indicates progress.

This living principle has dominated the world social order. Here it can
well be remarked that Vivekananda differs from the essence of classical Advaita
Philosophy. He has brought down the Brahman through Isvara to mankind by his
Practical Vedanta. He felt that the real practical side of Vedanta does not destroy
the world. Rather it explains in showing the real individuality. Romain Rolland
observes that like his master, Vivekananda accepts a religion of today.
Vivekananda’s emphatic appeal for mankind with a view to awakening the lost
individuality is inherent as eternal spirituality. In this manner, he as a stern
Karma-Yogi, actualizes the feeling of Brahman unlike Sankara, who has taken
Brahman by the intellect alone in his Advaita Philosophy.
It is a fact that Vivekananda has well reconciled excessive spirituality of the East with the material progress of the West. Through this principle, he desired to revolutionize the Indian society along with the European. His life’s motto, i.e., the service of the ‘millions of oppressed Narayanas’ than the direct experience of Brahman in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi possesses a bright relevance to the troubles torn modern society guided by utmost selfish desires. Vivekananda appealed to the world people to take two vows: (I) to liberate oneself and (II) to help the world. The great poet Rabindranath Tagore also in respect of Humanity has elaborated that man’s higher nature is the continuous zeal for Practical Vedanta.

Making a universal appeal through his religious concepts, Vivekananda put that all religions are based on morality which is explained by him not as the goal of man but the means through which freedom can be achieved. Man can realize the divinity from within with the help of yoga. Love cannot spring from fear. Personal purity, thereof, according to Vivekananda, should be counted superior to religion. Religion touches the whole individuality. For all morality, self-abnegation can be regarded as the centre. Morality has been existing since the very dawn of religion. Moral obligation depends upon realization of the Divine Oneness. Life, according to Vivekananda, becomes meaningful not by renouncing but by actively involving with renunciation and respect in social life. This may be regarded as the best application of the Vedantic Creed. Religion is
thus being and becoming with a universal appeal to understand the essential oneness of all the religious speculations of the world.

The teachings made by Vivekananda can be treated as a commentary on the teachings of Adiguru Sankaracarya. He explained the return of the soul from the high altar of ‘Neti-Neti’ to the world of forms and names. He emphasized God’s immanence rather than transcendence and made expansion of Sanditya’s famous text in the Chandogya Upanisad- “Sarvam Khalu idam Bramha” (All this indeed Brahman). He emphatically put that Vedanta should be brought out of the caves, temples, books etc. and should be applied in solving the practical problems of human beings in general. Thus Vivekananda evolved a ‘Neo Vedanta’ which is known as “Practical Vedanta”.

Vivekananda wanted harmony, not one-sided upliftment and to him it is possible to be the intellect of Sankara and the heart of Buddha. Love is a universal principle and only moving power of the whole universe. According to him, all the ways possess same value, touch the fibers of our being and appeal to our nature as spiritual beings. Thus, Vivekananda’s Neo- Vedanta combines Jnana, Bhakti, Karma and Yoga. He wants religion that are equally acceptable to all minds, it must be equally conducive to action. To become harmoniously balanced in all directions is his ideal of universal religion. This ideal is attained by Vivekananda by Yoga-Union. He called for an integral cultivation of all paths. Yet he opines that if any one of these paths is followed sincerely and entirely, it will lead to the ultimate goal, i.e., Liberation.
Vedanta which sees the unity of the self and the not self is approached by Vivekananda to solve the national and international problems. The strength of his approach is derived from his comprehensive vision of unity and synthesis. There is, according to Vivekananda, no real difference between material improvement, the ‘means’ and the spiritual and moral advancement, the ‘end’. In accordance with Vivekananda, the struggle of life exists in freedom - freedom from all bondages, actual or possible, physical, intellectual and spiritual. This all embracing thought comes out mostly in definition of religion. To him, each soul is potentially divine. The aim of man should be to reveal his divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal both. He gives stress on the existence of God and urged to take practical steps for discarding the ignorance of the masses.

Vivekananda may be treated as a patriot worker but his patriotism was nothing but the representation of his universal religion which he called practical Vedanta. Swami Ranganathananda observes thus- “He brings down Vedanta to fertilize the fields of common life so that life may be raised to unknown heights and made capable to taste Vedanta at its purest source.”

Vivekananda declared at the parliament of Religions that universal tolerance based on Hindu belief is one path way to the self-same God. He believed not only in universal tolerance but accepted all religions as true. He was happy for being a Hindu which gives shelter and refuge to all religions and nations on the earth. Vivekananda was such Hindu whose belief was in universal tolerance and oneness of religion. He says that every religion should assimilate
the spirit of others and yet preserve its own individuality and grow as per its own
law of growth. Perhaps Vivekananda is the first speaker in modern times to give
to the West the Vedanta philosophy of the essential divinity of life in their native
language of reason and science. His preaching of the highest truth is- absolute
divinity everywhere within and without.

Vivekananda rediscovered the meaning of religion in his intuitive
experience of Truth. He recovers the spirit of religion that is one and universal
from the evil effects of misinterpretation of religion in terms of its superficial
aspects like dogmas, creed, rituals and ceremonies. The great light of this
spiritual genius enlightens with the Truth that not dogma, creed, ritual and
ceremonies but religion helps a man to become perfect and remoulds him in a
form of divinity. Vivekananda established after long experiments that there is no
place of religious bigotry, conflicts among sects and hatred to any kind of faith in
religion. Because religion is nothing but the inner spiritual essence in man which
inspires him to achieve something higher and greater in life.

Truth is eternal which vibrated in the past, vibrates at present and will
vibrate in every heart of the human race. This is true that religion being
inseparably concerned with man is one and common to all ages. The notion of
religion is merely found to reveal in various expressions growing more and more
universal from the primitive stages. Therefore, it can be said that the primitive
concept of religion is an elementary form of the universal religion in modern age.
In spite of various forms of religion in various ages, it can be mentioned that the
urge for the supreme remains the common factor of religion of all ages. It was realized by the ancient Vedic Rishis as the essence of religion and with an open heart they conveyed to the human race. Even today to our utter astonishment and bewilderment, the very urge can be detected in the heart of every human being to illuminate the world and to show a world of bliss over the human race by uniting them into ‘one and oneness’.

If the aim of religion is the achievement of the ‘Brahmanhood’ in a living human form or ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ as depicted in the Vedas, it, then, embraces every man of every temperament of any country or place. The message of Vivekananda pervades the world from one end to the other, his recognition of man as a spiritual unit ever engaged in the actuality of rising from the lower plane. As man is potentially Divine, he essentially partakes a significant role in the process of becoming more and more perfect. He aims at the union of the Supreme enhancing his life force towards the highest centre of God manifestation. Thus, Vivekananda realizes that religion is nothing but a pursuit of truth already within us and is an attempt at reaching the final stage of a complete union with the supreme self through spiritual development.

The philosophy of universal tolerance advocated by Vivekananda which yields equal respect to all sects, creed and all faiths in the world is ultimately based upon the universal principle of ‘oneness’ of Truth. It not merely proves universal brotherhood but boldly indicates the root of our oneness that all men are living spirits. Since the whole world is the expression of one spirit, we are not
merely same as any other man, but also same as animals. We all are one body, one mind, one soul everywhere. We seem to be limited and divided owing to ignorance. So, religion should be the worship of spirit within oneself instead of ritualistic use through ‘lifeless mockeries’. Thus, religion should be treated as the fulfilment of spirit in us that aims at the unity of man on the strong base of spiritual strength. It then should be recognized as universal beyond any quarrel.

Vivekananda’s new approach about explanation of ultimate Reality on the basis of universal approval of all controversial points taken together and his unique realization of oneness of Truth are the most significant factors that made his religious philosophy a step advance from the traditional standpoint of classical Vedanta. Reality in his philosophy is God which is not only a hypothesis but should be realized in this very life. God has been proved as both transcendent to and immanent in the world. This is the fundamental point that actualizes Vivekananda’s realization of Truth as universal synthesizing religion and science, sacred and secular and western humanism and eastern spiritualism.

This endeavour with a view to establishing oneness of truth possesses its practical implication in the universal application of the Great Truth ‘Jiva is Siva’ in the life of man. Religion becomes necessarily universal if instead of being mere theories it is established on the practical grounds of actualization of the living ideals taken from the intuitive consciousness. Vivekananda has overcome the gulf between God and man which is being the root of humanistic philosophy. God is no more transcendental but God is everywhere and is the inherent
essential principle in man. So, it is better to find out God in man than to find out
in temples, mosques and churches. Man will be worshipped in place of God.
Therefore, the principle of love of mankind and worship in the form of service
made his religious philosophy such an elevating and encouraging that it evokes
the spirit or world soul for an ever embrace of suffering humanity.

Infact, no founder of religion preach absolutely new truth. Different
prophets preach the same fundamental truth in various languages at different
times which has been found in almost all religions of the world. Buddha and
Jaina speak respectively of the past Buddhas and Tirthankaras and they admit
that they have vivified and codified the same truths taught by them. In
Christianity, Christ puts-“I am not to destroy the law of the prophets but to fulfill
them”. Likewise, in Islam, Muhammad says – “This that I now telling unto you,
the Holy Quaran it is to be  found within the ancient seers too”. Kung-pen-tu
(Confucious) declared- “I could hand on, I cannot create new things”. The Sufis
declared that –“Just it is lustre of one Sun that shines in the different sea waves
and bubbles, so it is one truth that is expressed under the cover of different
froms”.

We find in all religions that each religion appears to an ethical ideal.
Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism advise their followers to become aware of the
operation of the inexplicable moral Law of Karma and to follow the path of
righteousness and wisdom to get rid of bondage. The path that Buddha taught
categorically is called “Majjhima Pratipada”, i.e., the middle path. Confucianism
primarily teaches –“Commit no excess, do nothing injurious, there are few who will not then take you for their pattern. The will should not be gratified to the full; pleasures should not be carried to excess”.

Taoism also teaches five moral principles and says much importance as moderation. “Continuing to fill pail after it is full, the water will be wasted …. He who possesses moderation is lasting and enduring. Too much is always a curse, most of all in wealth”.

Shintoism teaches its followers certain moral offences for it leads to the displeasure of God. Zoroastrianism is ethical and it asks its followers to follow three principles – “Think good, speak good and do good”. It teaches ‘Ahura Mazda’ (the principle of light, justice and good) to reap the benefit of righteousness. Christianity, a religion of love, teaches its followers the Golden path and to establish the kingdom of God on earth through righteousness. The Bible puts— “Be not righteous over much, neither make thyself over –wise, not over – wicked, neither thou be too foolish”.

Islam also asks its followers to develop a calm resignation to the Almighty God for guidance of the right path and to form one brotherhood.

These ethical principles are the principles of all religions of the world. In Hinduism, this universal approach has been found since the period of Rg Veda, “United be the thought of all that may happen to agree”.

Bhagaban Das, a great writer, points out—“all these religions aim at binding together a new again the hearts of all to each other and back again to God”. Jaina’s concept of Ahimsa is nothing but another name for Universal love. Islam and Christianity teach the brotherhood of man under the common faith in God. As a matter of fact, all
religions teach us to rise above selfishness and to develop a spirit of universal love.

Hinduism looks upon liberation, i.e., ultimately God realization as the highest goal of life. The Upanishads declare-“The one God is hidden in all living beings, the living witness binding all hearts. The wise who seeks them and find them in themselves, to them one else, is eternal joy”\(^\text{13}\) The idea of salvation is bound up with the Christian concept of God. It treats the spirit of man as candle of Lord and which is to be lit up with divine flame and advises its followers “Be ye perfect even as your heavenly father is perfect”\(^\text{14}\) Islamic religion too declares-“Every child is born in Islam, it is their parents who make them Jew or Christian”\(^\text{15}\)

Thus, the role played by different religious dialogues in building a spirit of universal religion is very much significant. Because the religious dialogues are only reproclamation of the same essential truths in varied languages, new forms amidst new settings and new conditions of life.

Universal religion should not be treated as one more religion including the many existing from beforehand, rather it should be treated as the only religion pre-existent by nature all over the world which will be acceptable to and followed by all religious persons alike. This religion will become the religion of all religious men, and it will be not of one specific group or society. Universal religion will, in this way, become the universally accepted religion. It has been a matter of feeling that once universal religion is realized from within, all
bloodshed and enmity in the name of religion will be fully over and the real role of religion then will be played, i.e., the role of uniting all people of the world by one thread of universal brotherhood. Practically viewing, such an environment may highly be beneficial for the world people and so it may be highly desirable. We may have an idea that the so-called founders of new religions are, in fact, merely Re-proclaimers of the same Essential Truths, in new expressions of languages, new forms, amidst new settings, new conditions of life. So, these religious founders may be named Re-form-ers only. Really speaking, we receive no new Religion (in the singular); but always merely the One Eternal Universal Religion, that is the Common Core and Essence of all particular religions. They are new religions (in the plural) in this sense, that, the followers after their Re-proclaiming Re-former, have step by step made up new rites, ceremonies, forms, around that core-teaching, in respect of new situations of new times. Hence, it is seen that each particular religion wears the attire of newness, and the more as because the new rituals slowly overpowers, covers up, hides away fully the Ancient Core; so that the Means swallow the End, and start posing themselves as the end. The so-called new religions possess the sameness with the case of new civilizations that grow up and decay side by side. The language, dress, food, housing, social conventions, manners- and-morals, marriage forms, domestic ways, art forms, recreations, etc., of each, are more or less different from those of others; yet the essential urges, needs, appetites, mental and bodily faculties, which are exercised in and satisfied by each, are the same. The God in Man, and
in all living Beings, fulfils Him-Self in ever-varying ways; in every way is He Him-Self fulfilled.

Truly speaking, such a religion is totally not required. The very needful things are tolerance, sympathy, compassion, mutual understanding or sharing to the followers of all the religions of the world. To our mind, if there is in fact, a religion that can be named universal by nature and character, this will create situation to make an end of true religion. Religion will then be merely replaced by fashion, an external clothing. The complete delink situation will be arisen between religion and its root. Religion exists in inner conviction of man’s spiritual nature and its result is the apparent way of life, i.e., man’s outward way of life is nothing but just a reflection of that conviction. Man, from real point of view, is not mere automata. He possesses freedom to differ from one another in their deep thinking and are bound to possess various ways of life with the help of their deep-rooted speculations and determinations. It may be named as the special privilege of man. From this standpoint, if universal religion becomes a thrust upon him from outside in an artificial form, then he lacks that privilege and there we will get neither real man nor real religion. Religion is a medium of satisfying the hunger of one’s soul which comes out of deficiencies of worldly human life from one point of view. And if we get different ways of satisfying this hunger, then where is the base for quarrel? Each and every person possesses freedom to differ from others from different matters concerning life and the very being. Why then he should be kept away from this privilege in the domain of religion? Each
and every man possesses right to differ from others and the evolving of any universal religion seems needless. The world people are only to learn to accommodate and respect differences regarding religious matters. These differences are quite natural and they must be recognized and tolerated as such. A man cannot become both intolerant and religious simultaneously. The chief ideals of religion should be tolerance and accommodation of the ideas and religious sentiments of other religions of the world. Those who find incapable of doing it, he does not possess freedom to demand himself to be religious.

Hence, Vivekananda’s concept of universal religion may be a safeguard of decaying morality in the society of ill practices, malice and hatred to other faiths. Man in this age of spiritual crisis really boasts of his power for the scientific discoveries and his humanitarian side is almost lost. The present time reminds all human beings for the upliftment of humanity. Due to impact of science, man himself has become a machine loosing his sense of moral values, even he is not aware of loving his neighbours and to discharge any responsible duty to others. The concept of Universal religion which teaches to cast love against hatred and compassion against violence with calm and dignity is highly required in present day context with a view to reshaping the ideals of man. Vivekananda’s neo-vedantic standpoint based upon the combination of head and heart, science and religion, the synthesis of the East and the West and enquiry of Truth lying in man may be expected to give birth to a new world of strength and prosperity. Religious Truth and science are not antagonistic to each other as science too gets
the root of mysterious and mighty force that is all pervading in the world. So, for
the extreme crisis of humanness, the world today urgently requires a religion
along with science that will point out the right way of utilizing the scientific
achievements for human well-being. It appears to be a great challenge before
modern scientific mind that if the self-seeking man is converted into a servant of
God-in-man, it will detect the ‘Great Man’ within him. It may be said to be only
way that by realizing man, the universal man, the unity of mankind can be
established. Only love and not the sword brings the whole world under the same
umbrella.

The religious interpretation made by Vivekananda as growing, expanding
and unfolding of soul to learn how to love mankind and the concept of man as
the abode of Divinity, the religious conception of R.N.Tagore as unending
journey of man towards the Infinite. Aurobindo’s emphasis that the aim of
religion and his idea of cosmic salvation that aims at the divinization of the
whole universe and Radhakrishnan’s clear cut explanation on the concept of man
as the owner of creative energies are the sophisticated expressions of the
fundamental sayings of Vivekananda’s philosophy of religion. As a matter of
fact, the idea of humanistic religion is still growing in this present age because,
today each individual possesses a great responsibility to take a part with a view
to constructing a new civilization of peace, prosperity and strength.

From what has been discussed above, it follows that Vivekananda kept
belief in the infinite soul behind every man with the ability to become good and
great. He called emphatically upon mankind. – ‘Arise, awake and stop not till the
goal is reached.’\textsuperscript{16} His philosophy is an unending attempt at awakening
humanity. His philosophy may be regarded as the philosophy of fundamental
unity underlying in all religions. He inspired mankind to understand and follow
the universal religion through religious tolerance and universal acceptance.
Vivekananda advised all men to recognize all religions as true. He desired to
foster the very spirit of oneness among all followers of different religions of the
world together with a heartful call for action. He preached the message of hope
and courage. He wanted to survive the lost spirit of mankind as well as to
become aware of his heritage, dignity and responsibility and to make the self-
confidence and internal determination of man more stronger. He advised man to
attain the spirit of love and brotherhood for a balanced religious environment all
over the world. In this respect, his view is that these points necessarily are
significant for the all round development and prosperity of human race for all
time to come.

Thus, it is clear that Vivekananda’s concept of universal religion is,
therefore, not a new religion with a new scripture and new liturgy, it is a new
approach to religion, a new spiritual and moral ideal. It not merely prescribes
tolerance, it stresses on acceptance of other religions as true thereby making
religion a principle of human harmony. The concept of universal religion by
Vivekananda is a beautiful discovery of universality in all the religions of the
world.