CHAPTER - I

EVOLUTION OF THE NATIONALISTIC PERSONALITY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
The Contemporary Age:- Swami Vivekananda was born in an age when India was rotting under the formidable weight of British imperialism. The intention of the imperial power was to retain their hold over India by hook or by crook in disregard of the socio-religious and politico-economic cries in India. The British nefarious intention can be best summed up as, "...from Robert Clive to Winston Churchill one of the supreme objective of the British race was the preservation of the Eastern possession, if not for all time certainly for as long as the nation had the right to retain." The loss of India was beyond their comprehension. On the contrary the British had a determination not to leave India to Indians. As a consequence of such British imperial policy and the Western influence the channels of Indian culture were getting shrivelled and dry. The vast sub-continent had become moribund, decadent and effete. The creative and assimilative spirit of Indian civilization had reached the lowest ebb. The intellectual life of India had become dull and sluggish. Knowledge was petrified. The society with all its evils was like a pool of stagnant water. The traditional charm of Indian social life was on the wane.

The Western civilization and culture challenged the old values and beliefs of India. As a consequence the old rites and rituals, customs and traditions gradually decayed. All the institutions - social, religious, political and economic were collapsing at a terrifying speed. Literally India was in a melting point.

(1) M.N. Das, Indian National Congress-Vrs-The British, Vol-I, P.VII
(2) Ibid, P.XV
As a reaction there arose two divergent schools of thought—the conservatives and the radicals. B.N. Luniya writes, "On the one side there were conservatives, who clung to the superstitions and life-less rigidity of traditions. They sought to strengthen the forces of orthodox. On the other hand there was gradually rising in social prominence, a group of educated Indians, lured by the Western ideas. They looked to the West for guidance and inspiration. They advocated extreme radical policy. They tried to explain the hollowness of Indian religion and society." (3)

As a reaction against the threat of complete collapse of Indian socio-economic-political system, there occurred in 1857 the first war of India's independence that was suppressed by the imperialist as 'Sepoy Mutiny'. The British imperial power in order to fortify their position on the Indian soil and forestall any future threat to the empire, embarked upon a repressive policy. Inspite of such massive repression, the revolutionary spirit was simmering underneath in Bengal where Swami Vivekananda was born. It was, thus, in a tense atmosphere in 1863 that Swami Vivekananda was born. As Prof. Hiren Mukerjee writes, "It was in this surcharged atmosphere and not in any kind of placid vacuum that young Vivekananda lived, moved and had his being." (4) So the air that Swami Vivekananda breathed, perhaps developed his flair for revolution against the agony of the British imperial power.

(3) B.N. Luniya, Evolution of Indian Culture, P. 483

(4) Prof. Hiren Mukerjee, Vivekananda and Indian Freedom, P. 10
Fortunately this period of national history is synchronised by the cultural rebirth that goes by the title of Indian Renaissance. There emerged many reforming institutions, prominent among them being Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj etc, patronised by the veteran apostles like Raja Rám Mohan Roy, Mohadeo Govind Ranade, Swami Dayananda Saraswati respectively. The organisations launched vigorous crusade to save Indian religion and culture from the barbaric onslaught of the West. This was the state of affairs when Swami Vivekananda was born and had his being.

Swami Vivekananda - His Horizon of Political Philosophy:

Swami Vivekananda is acclaimed world over, as a metaphysician par-excellance of Vedantic School. He was one of the great interpreters of Vedantic philosophy in modern times. He championed the cause of 'Sanatana Dharma' and made persistent effort to realise the dream of universalising this religion and philosophy. He was never a political philosopher in the traditional sense of the term in which we regard Hobbes, Rousseau, or Hegel or Basanquet as system builders in the field of political thought. Politics was neither his concern nor his trait. As it is said, "He does not enter in to the analytical study of the concepts of political philosophy nor does he probe in to the dynamics of political process and behaviour."

It is a fact that Swami Vivekananda was a great mystic of recent time. As a mystic spiritualism was the be all and end-

(5) V.P. Varma, Modern Indian Political Thought, P.10
all of his life. Even the renascent spirit of the age could not influence him very much. He tilted towards spiritualism more and more. His soul craved for spiritual realisation so much so that it caused severe turmoil and commotion in his heart. To satisfy the burning fire of his heart, he clung to meditation and study of the Vedas. However, under the guidance of his great spiritual preceptor—Sri Ramkrishna, the course of his life took a different turn. He realised that political liberation is the prelude to spiritual liberation. His thought that social emancipation is the basis of all spiritualism and it is a positive condition to spiritual realisation, subsequently turned him to be a "great humanist, democrat, patriot and a distinguished leader of the spiritual culture of India," who inflamed the renascent spirit of 19th century. He turned out to be a great patriot with burning love for his motherland. He had a vision of the unity of the country against the British imperialism. He bent all his strength for regeneration of Hindu nationalism through revival of Vedantism. His teachings and personality had far-reaching influence on the nationalist movement of Bengal in particular and India in general. It changed the dimension of the polity of independent India. Dr. Karan Singh has aptly described him as "The spiritual progenitor of the radicals."

Thus, though Swami Vivekananda did not propound any theory of nationalism like a political scientist, nationalism was his very creed. Love for his motherland was in his very blood, though he breathed the air of spiritualism. This led sister Nivedita to remark befittingly that, "Just as Ramkrishna

(6) Described by I.P. Chelishev in the preface of 'Swami Vivekananda - Studies in Soviet Union,' p. XIII
infact, without knowing any books had been a living epitome of the Vedanta so was Vivekananda of the National life. But of the theory of this he was unconscious. (8)

Underneath his spiritualism, there vibrates a strong current of nationalism that developed gradually and reached the high watermark when he returned triumphantly to India after his historic mission in the West and made a whirlwind tour through India.

Early Days:- Swami Vivekananda of later days or Narendranath Datta, as he was called in his premonastic days, was born in Culcutta on 12, January 1863. Datta family was a rich and respectable family of wide repute, noted for charity, learning and strong passion for independence. His grandfather Durga Charan Datta, a Sanskrit and a Persian scholar, was wellversed in laws. But after the birth of his son, Vishwanath Datta, he renounced the world and became a monk. Thus renunciation for realisation of dharma formed the very blood of Datta family, which manifested at large in Vivekananda, the most illustrious son of the family.

Vishwanath, the father of Narendranath was an attorney at Calcutta High Court. He was proficient in English and Persian and took great delight in reciting to his family the poems of great Persian poet- Hafiz. He also enjoyed the study of Bible and the Hindu scriptures in Sanskrit. Although he was a prosperous man, his charitable disposition was quite

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(7) Dr. Karan Singh, The prophet of Indian Nationalism, P.19
(8) Sister Nivedita, The Master As I Saw Him, P. 199
remarkable. He often spent beyond his means for bringing relief to the suffering humanity. As it has been observed,
"While his earnings were large and Narendra was brought up in affluence, Vishwanath who was, known for his charity, liberal outlook and sympathy for the afflicted spent his fortune recklessly without regard to the morrow or the financial future of the family."\(^{(9)}\) Charitable and sympathetic to the poor and needy to an extravagant degree Viswanath Datta was also very rationalistic and progressive in outlook in socio-religious matters.

Bhubaneswari Devi, mother of Narendranath, was a model of Indian womanhood with a regal bearing. She was profoundly religious and highly compassionate towards the poor beggars. It has been observed about her, "The poor and the hopeless were the special object of their solicitude."

The nature and disposition of his parents left an indelible print upon the mind of little Narendranath. His mother influenced him more than his father. He himself has said, "I am indebted to my mother for whatever knowledge I have acquired."\(^{(10)}\) Though restless and given much to fun and frolic during his early childhood, Narendranath had a special bent for spiritualism. He would play at worshiping or meditating on images of Ram, Sita, Siva, etc. The stories from the great epics - the Ramayana and the Mahabharat, which his mother told him left an unforgettable impression on his

\(^{(9)}\) V.K.R.V. Rao, Swami Vivekanananda, P.8
\(^{(10)}\) A Short Life of Swami Vivekanananda, Advaita Ashram, P.2
\(^{(11)}\) Swami Nikhilananda, A Biography of Vivekanananda, P.11
mind. As a result, traits such as passion for freedom, courage for struggle, sympathy for the poor, compassion for the afflicted and devotion towards the wandering monks appeared spontaneously in him. The growing plant reveals itself in the seedling found in Narendranath. Even in his childhood Narendranath put forth convincing argument for every proposition. With these vehiment potentialities of head and heart, he grew in to a vigorous youth.

At the Feet of Sri Ramkrishna:

As a youth Narendranath's leonine beauty supplemented his courage. He had the build of an athlete, a resonant and a superb intellect. He distinguished himself in athletics, philosophy and music. Among all his colleagues he was the undisputed leader in every sphere. At college he studied and absorbed Western thoughts which implanted a spirit of critical inquiry in his mind. His inborn proclivity for religiosity and spiritualism, his great veneration and adoration for ancient Indian culture on the one hand and his argumentative nature coupled with sharp intellect on the other were now at war with each other. He craved for solution of these problems for retaining his peace of mind. During this period he sought to find comfort in the Brahmo Samaj - a great socio-religious movement of the time, piloted by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the doyen of Indian renaissance. Brahmo Samaj believed in formless God, deprecia ted the worship of idols and devoted itself only to

(12) Swami Budhananda, Vivekananda - His Call to the Nation, F.2
(13) R. Ramkrishnan, Swami Vivekananda, Awakener of Modern India, P.5
(14) Swami Budhananda, Vivekananda - His Call to the Nation, F.3
various forms of socio-religious reforms. Inquisitive and restless Narendranath frenetically met almost all the so-called veteran religious leaders, but could not get any convincing reply from them to his question about the existence of God. This only accentuated his spiritual restlessness.

Narendranath made hectic effort to quench his spiritual thirst. He dived deeply into the philosophy of Descrates, Hume, Kant, Fichte, Spinoza, Hegel, Comte, Darwin and Mill, but found no peace. The more he studied the Western philosophy the bigger became the mark of interrogation as regards the existence of God in his mental horizon. At this critical hour he remembered the words of his English Professor William Hasti, who had mentioned that a saint lived at Dakshineswar just outside Calcutta, who experienced ecstasy, described by Wordsworth in his poem "Excursion". His cousin Ramchandra Datta also influenced him to visit the saint. Thus, came about the historic meeting in 1881 of the two great souls - the greatest prophet of modern India and the greatest carrier of his message to the world. The weary traveller at last reached the shadowy oasis to take rest and drink the ambrosia to his heart's content.

After meeting Ramakrishna Paramahansa Narendranath asked, 'Sir, have you seen God?' Sri Ramakrishna as a loving father answered, 'Yes, I have seen Him
just as I see you here only more intensely. At last he met here one who could assure him from his own experience that God exists. The gathering clouds of despair and misgiving were dispelled. The great mark of interrogation on the issue of providential existence vanished from his mind. While Ramkrishna tested him in so many ways, Narendranath on the other hand tested Sri Ramkrishna in order to assertain the truth of his spiritual assertions.

With sad demise of his father terrible poverty and privation gripped Narendranath's rich and well-to-do family. Creditors were knocking at his door. Even some of his relatives threatened to turn away his family from his family home. Narendranath, the son of a rich man now became poorest of the poor in the college. Even shoe became a thing of luxury for him. His garments were of coarsest cloth and many time he went to his classes without food. Romain Rolland has observed, "There were six or seven mouths and swarm of creditors. From that day onwards Narendranath tasted misery, knew the vain search of employment and the denial of friends." Of his hard days Swami Vivekananda has written, "I was dying of starvation. Barefooted I went from office to office and was refused every where. I learnt by experience what human compassion is. This was my first contact with the realities of life; and I discovered it....had no room for the weak, the poor, the deserted...."(16)

Such poverty, destitution, deprivation and unemployment for the first time in his life changed his

(15) Romain Rolland, Life of Ramkrishna, P. 242
(16) Quoted in Romain Rolland, Life of Ramkrishna, P.241-42
view of life and philosophy. He clearly sensed the plight of the poor and the destitutes. Now he had the opportunity of contrasting his lot with those of the privileged class of people. He could experience what equality means and how inequality saps the energy and vigour of the people. However, poverty and privation did not dishearten Narendranath. He rather firmly stood the test of time. At the suggestion of his great Master he tried to pray to Mother Kali at Dakhineswar for the alleviation of the family's distress. However, though his need was for wealth he could pray only for pure knowledge and devotion.

Narendranath surrendered himself to his Master in return with infinite patience calmed the rebellious spirit of the young disciple and led him forth from doubts to certainty and from anguish to spiritual bliss. But more than Ramkrishna's spiritual guidance and support it was his great affection and love that conquered the heart of young Narendranath.

Gradually the spiritual fire which was lit in Narendranath sprang up high with formidable flame. He liked to satisfy it through various intense spiritual practices. One day Narendranath asked his Master to bless him with Nirvikalpa Samadhi—ordinarily regarded as the highest spiritual experience, the Master admonished him saying, 'Shame on you, I thought you would grow like a huge banyan tree, Sheltering thousands from the scorching miseries

(17) Swami Budhananda, Vivekananda -His Call to the Nation, P. 4
of the world. But now I see you seek your own liberation."(18)  
All the same Narendranath had the much coveted realisation  
after which the Master said that the key to this would thence­  
forth remain in his keeping and the door would not be opened  
till Narendranath had finished the task for which he was born.  
The great humanist Sri Ramkrishna hereafter entrusted Narendra­  
nath the great task of giving shelter to the suffering mankind  
and blessed him saying, "Oh! Naren today I have given you my  
all and have become a Fakir, a penniless beggar. By the force  
of power, transmitted by me, greatest things will be done by  
you; only after that you will go to whence you came."(19)  
Narendranath's drooping spirit awakened, which kindled a new  
passion in his heart. His view of life underwent a great change.  
The course of his life and thought took a different turn. He  
saw a mighty task awaiting him and he felt to be saddled with  
enormous responsibility of providing shelter to mankind  
against the scorching miseries of the world. All the advice  
and admonition of his great Master knocked at the door of his  
heart all along.  

At the feet of his Master, Narendranath realised  
the significance of Vedanta philosophy, the essence of non­  
dualism of the creator and the creation, the God and the  
Universe and the inseparability of each living being in the  
Universe. He realised under the impact of his Master that all  
the living beings are the embodiments of the 'Divine Self' or  
at least fragments of 'Divine Self' and the sparks of the

(18) Quoted in "Swami Vivekananda -His call to the Nation  
by Swami Budhananda, P. 5  

(19) Quoted in V.K.R.V. Rao, Swami Vivekananda, P. 45
Divine Flame. Hence service to God can be rendered only by service to man.

One day some time in 1884, Sri Ramkrishna while discoursing on the essence of Vaishnava religion with his disciples, said, "This religion enjoins upon its followers the practice of three things—relish for the name of God, compassion for all living creatures and service to the Vaishnavas— the devotees of the Lord." Immediately there after he fell in to Samadhi and regaining his consciousness he said, "Compassion for creature: Thou Fool: An insignificant worm crawling on earth, thou show compassion to others: who art thou to show compassion? No—it can not be. It is not compassion for others but rather service to man recognising him to be the varitable manifestation of God."

The Master's emphasis on 'Service to Man' had a very great impact on the disciple and that constituted the greatest message of the Master for Narendranath. That inspired him all the more to fulfil the great task, entrusted to him by the Master. The young unemployed Narendranath with the burden of a family to shoulder, now felt greatly relieved and saw the vision of service to the humanity at large rather than to a single family. After having realised the message of his Master he himself said, "What a strange light have I discovered in those words of the Master? How beautifully has he reconciled the ideal of Bhakti (devotion) with the knowledge of the Vedanta (Non-dualism). I have understood from these words of wisdom that the ideal of Vedanta lived by the recluse out side the pale of society can be practised even from the
hearth and home and applied to all our daily schemes of life. Whatever may be the vocation of a man, let him understand and realise that it is God alone who has manifested Himself as the world and created beings. He is both immanent and transcendent. It is He, who has become all diverse of creatures, objects of our love, yet is beyond all these - such realisation of Divinity in humanity leaves no room for egotism. By realising it a man can not have any jealousy or pity for any other being. Service of man knowing him to be the manifestation of God purified the heart, and in no time such an aspirant realises himself as part and parcel of God-Existence, knowledge and Bliss."(20)

The message of non-dualism of God and the Universe, the message that all are the manifestation of the 'Divine Self', was driven home to Narendranath by the Master. The disciple realised the inherent equality of all human beings. Hence the principle of social inequality, division of society in to privileged and unprivileged social groups, appeared irrational and unscientific to Narendranath. His philosophical out-look moved further in the direction of a free egalitarian society. In the context of his Master's message of non-dualism and divinity of human beings Narendranath later on said, "I shall make it the common property of all, the wise and the fool, the rich and the poor, the Brahmin and the pariah."(21)

(20) A short Life of Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashram, P.25
(21) Ibid, P. 25
At the feet of his Master, Narendranath also learnt the art of renunciation that became most essential ingredient of his concept of nationalism. Of course from his youth he had developed a flair for the life of renunciation. As he himself said, "From my youth up.....every night just as I fell asleep two dreams take shape. In one I saw myself among the great ones of the earth; the possessor of riches, power and glory and I felt that the capacity to attain all these was in me. But the next instant I saw myself renouncing all worldly things, dressed in a simple loin cloth, living on alms, sleeping at the foot of a tree and I thought that I was also capable of living thus like the Rishis of old. Of these two pictures, the second took upper hand and I felt that only thus could a man attain supreme bliss....... And I fell a sleep in the foretaste of that bliss..... And each night it was renewed." (22)

Narendranath's flair for renunciation that developed in him since his youth received unprecedented impetus from the message of his Master. It took deep roots in him, who said, "I was convinced that I was not born like humdrum people to earn money and maintain my family much less to strive for sense pleasure. I began secretly to prepare myself to renounce the world like my grand father."(23)

Thus under the spell of his great Master Narendranath not only renounced his desire of material pleasure and comfort but also renounced his desire for personal salvation -

(22) Romain Rolland, The life of Ramkrishna, P.28-29
(23) Quoted in V.K.R.V. Rao, Swami Vivekananda, P. 37
Nirvikalpa Samadhi, in the interest of social and spiritual emancipation of mankind.

After the death of his Master Sri Ramkrishna on 16 August, 1886, Narendranath took leadership of the Master's disciples in fulfilling the latter's vision of revolutionising the world by rendering service to the suffering humanity—the poor, the downtrodden. In an old dilapidated house at Baranagar, the disciples were organised into the Ramkrishna order. Thus the foundation of Ramkrishna brotherhood was laid in the midst of a life of intense austerity and spiritual practices and it was on a Christmas Eve in 1886 at Antpur, sitting round a huge fire they took the vow of sannyasa. The sannyasis of the Ramkrishna order under Narendranath's leadership became crusaders of truth and children of light, ever learning, for whom the whole world became an open university. They discussed history and philosophy of different nations and examined thoroughly the thoughts of Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel etc. along with that of Buddha, Sankaracharya, Ramanuja, Chaitannya etc. Swami Nikhilananda writes, "Narendra did not want the brother disciples to be pain-hugging, cross-grained ascetics. They should broaden their outlook by assimilating the cross-currents of the world." (24)

However, for Narendranath—Swami Vivekananda of the future—there was a call from the unknown to know itself, to see itself more keenly, more intimately. If the master

(24) Swami Nikhilananda, Biography of Swami Vivekananda, P.73
commanded that he must serve people his inner self commanded that he must first see these people in order to ascertain whether they actually need service and the nature of service that they need. So he decided to set out in his voyage of discovery of India alone as a wandering monk.

The Wandering Monk: In 1888 Narendranath left the Baronagar monastery, the seat of Ramakrishna order and travelled alone as an unknown mendicant. He began to assume various names to conceal his identity in order to be swallowed up in the immensity of India. "Now it was that the natural desire of an Indian monk for a life of solitude gave way to prescience that he was to fulfil a great destiny; that his was not the life of an ordinary recluse, struggling for personal salvation."(25) Under the influence of his burning desire to know India better and the mute appeal rising all around him from oppressed India, he went to Varanasi—one of the holiest cities of the Hindus. After Varanasi he visited Lucknow, Agra, Brindaban, Hathras and Rishikesh and then he returned to Baranagar for a time. At Hathras he met Sarat Chandra Gupta who became his first disciple (Swami Saradananda). He revealed to him the great mission—the mission of alleviating the miseries of the people around him, entrusted to him by his great Master—"I have a great mission to fulfil and I am at despair at the smallness of my capacity. I have an injunction from my guru to carry out his mission. This is nothing less than regeneration.

(25) Swami Budhananda, Vivekananda—His Call to the Nation
P. 7
of my motherland."(26) Sarat Chandra, who was a Railway staff at Hathras resigned his post and followed his guru to help him in the fulfilment of his great mission. The plan of mission that Narendranath had embarked upon was Herculean in magnitude. Still, Narendranath did not lose his heart. He had abiding faith in his Master, who would help him to translate his plan in to reality.

An important event in Narendranath's life took place in 1890, when he met Pavhari Baba of Gazipur, for whose saintliness he had the greatest admiration throughout his life. At this time he oscillated between two desires - to be absorbed in the eternal silence of the Absolute or to fulfill his great Master's mission. He hoped that Pavhari Baba would appease the remorse gnawing at his heart, which was due to the fact that the fervour for the highest absorption in the Divine drew him away from the work entrusted to him by his Master. For twenty days Narendranath was on the verge of yielding to this temptation, but the vision of Sri Ramkrishna always came to draw him back.

In July 1890 Narendranath took leave of Sri Sarada Devi, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramkrishna, who was the spiritual guide of the young monks after the great Master's passing away. He also took leave of his brother monks with the firm resolve to cut himself free from all ties and to go into the solitude of the Himalayas for he felt it was essential to remain allalone. As Romain Rolland has observed, "This was the great departure. Like a diver he plunged in to the ocean

(26) S.N.Dhaban, Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda Part- II, P. 287
of India and the ocean of India covered his tracks. Among its flotsam and jetsam, he was nothing more than one nameless Sannyasin in saffron robe among a thousand others. But the fire of genius burned in his eyes. He was a prince despite all his disguise.”(27)

His wandering took him to various places of pilgrimage and historical interest in Uttar Pradesh, Rajsthan, Gujrat, Moharastra, Mysore, Kerla, Madras, Hydrabad etc. Everywhere the glory of ancient India came vividly before his eyes—whether political, cultural or spiritual. In the midst of this rich heritage the abject misery of the Indian masses arrested his attention. It gave a shock to his heart and tears to his eyes. He moved from one princely state to another. Everywhere he explored the avenues of mitigating and ameliorating the lot of the poor and the downtrodden. He happened to meet many leading personalities and great rulers of the princely states. Among them Moharaja Ajit Singh of Khetri became his first friend and ardent disciple. At poona he stayed with Balgangadhar Tilak, a great nationalist leader of Moharastra. At first Tilak talked with Swami Vivekananda some what ironically but later on his depth of learning and profundity of thought impressed him so much so that he invited Swami Vivekananda to stay with him. From there he toured to many places of India.

Where ever he went it was not the place but the people that moved him most. It was the terrible poverty and

(27) Quoted in Swami Budhananda, Vivekananda – His Call to the Nation, P.8
the misery of the masses that caused his soul to burn in agony and led him to moan, "The only God in whom I believe the sum total of all souls and above all my God— the afflicted, my God the poor of all races."(28) His love for the people of India reached the supreme height. As Dr.V.K.R.V. Rao has observed, "and his soul was caught up with an ecstasy of vision of the Narayana Himself — the supreme Lord of the Universe, whose love is boundless, whose pity knows no distinction between the high and the low, the pure and vile, the rich and the poor."(29)

He had travelled through the whole of India, often on foot for nearly three years, coming to know India at first hand. At the fag end of his journey he went to KannyaKumari, the southern most tip of India and sat on a solitary rock. The vast panorama of his experience of his travel passed before his mind's eye. 'He meditated upon the greatness of India's past, her shattered present and the future of India, causes of her downfall and the ways of her resurrection.'(30) He discovered the supreme truth that as the life-force of India lies in spiritualism, nothing else but revival of spiritualism would resurrect India nationally. Spiritualism alone would reassure her national vitality against all evils of the foreign rule. Hence he turned out to be a convinced nationalist and with firm conviction he took pledge to propagate the teachings and the messages of his great Master — Sri Ram Krishna, based on the spiritual philosophy of India. As it is said, "Here was a strong

(28) Romain Rolland, Life of Swami Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel, P.26
(29) V.K.R.V. Rao, Swami Vivekananda, P-67-68
phenomena, Vivekananda, the nationalist has found in the teachings and practices of Sri Ramkrishan, based on the ancient Indian religion of Vedanta, a faith, which fully satisfied all the cravings of his intellect and completely quenched the thirst of his soul. They reestablished his pride in the greatness of Indian tradition, which had been rudly shaken by Western thoughts."(31)

Narendranath's pilgrimage brought vividly home to him the wretchedness and squallor, both moral and mental in which India of his day was sunk. His heart bled to see the shocking state of his country-men every where. He cried, "O' Lord, why do you create these miserable creatures? I can not bear the sight of them. How long O' Lord, how long."(32)

The voice of his Master, 'Religion is not for empty bellies. The physical need of man must be fulfilled before aspiring for the intellectual and spiritual perfection' went deep in to his heart. The responsibility that his Master had entrusted to him became crystal clear before his eyes and he could not think of the life of a recluse for him. He heard the piteous moans of hunger of teeming millions of Indians all around. This made him take a momentous decision to go first to the West and seek help for the starving people of India to give a proper shape to his life's mission. He himself has said, "I travelled all over India and it was very

(30) Swami Budhananda, Vivekananda - His Call to the Nation, P40
(31) Dr. Tara Chand Mishra, History of Freedom Movement in India, Vol-II, P.259
(32) Quoted in R. Ramkrishnan, Vivekananda - Awakener of Modern India, P.50
painful to me to see the terrible poverty and lot of the masses. I can not hold my tears. I am now firmly convinced that it is no use going on preaching a doctrine to the unfortunate people without mitigating their suffering and poverty. It is precisely for this, for the poor suffering people of India that I am going to America."(33)

With this decision he journeyed to Rameswaram and Madurai. He then went on to Madras. Madras found Narendranath a completely changed man. The city marked, above all, his tremendous nationalistic attitude and assertions. R.Ramkrishnan has written, "Madras saw in Swami not just an eminent person or a skilled savant, but a national phenomenon."(34)

In this city of the south Narendranath's desire for visiting the West was intensified when he came to know from the news papers, about the Parliament of Religions, that was being convened at Chicago in America. He revealed to his Madras followers his intention of attending the Parliament of Religions. His strong nationalist passions made him further convince that "unless an energy comes from accross the seas, it will not be possible to shake off the lethargy of the nation of Lotus-eaters, to rouse their dormant spirit and that the medium of the Occident is necessary to infuse life and vigor in to our fossilised constitution."(35) However, Narendra-nath would not leave the Indian shores unless there was Divine

(33) Quoted in 'Swami Vivekananda-Studies in Soviet Union, Article- Ideals of Enlightenment, P.148
(34) R.Ramkrishnan, Swami Vivekananda - Awakener of Modern India, P.50
(35) Manomohan Ganguly, Swami Vivekananda-A Study, P.36
Will behind his plan. He was not yet certain that it was the Divine Mother's will that he should go to the West. At this juncture he had a sympathetic dream in which his great Master - Sri Ramkrishna walked out in to the sea and beckoned him to follow. This, coupled with the blessings and permission of Sri Sarada Devi, who also, in a dream, had received Sri Ramkrishna's consent, settled the question for him and his young friends set about collecting the necessary funds. There after Narendranath called upon the Moharaja of Khetri and at his suggestion assumed the name-Vivekananda. The Moharaja extended the best possible help and sent his personal secretary to see off Swami Vivekananda at Bombay. Swami Vivekananda's great journey to the West commenced on 31st May, 1893, which was really an expedition for Digvijaya (conquest of the quarters) on the part of an Indian spiritual nationalist like Swami Vivekananda. (36)

On the World Stage:-

Swami Vivekananda's voyage to America was an exhilarating experience. He travelled to America via China, Japan and Canada. He reached Chicago at the middle of July. At Canton he saw some Buddhist monastries. He also found there many manuscripts in Sanskrit language and the Bengali alphabet. In Japan his heart over-whelmed with admiration for her tremendous industrial progress and calmness of the people. To quote Romain Rolland, "Every where both in

(36) R.Ramkrishnan, Swami Vivekananda- Awakener of Modern India, P. 52
China and Japan his attention was attracted by all that might confirm his hypothesis - his conviction - alike of the religious influence of ancient India over the empires of the Far-East and of the spiritual unity of Asia. At the same time the thought of the ills from which his country was suffering never left him and the sight of the progress achieved by Japan reopened the wound." (37)

Backwardness of India was his source of agony and anxiety. He conveyed his reactions to his Madras friends. It has been said, "His epistles were really fiery shafts from the quiver of his burning passion for the redemption of the motherland." (38) When he reached Chicago, dazzling with riches and affluence, side by side with Western inventive genius, he felt bewildered like a child. He was struck with awe to see the land with its uncommon grandeur of affluence. For twelve days he filled his eager eyes with this new world. He was overwhelmed to see the valour, vitality and drive of the Westerners to explore nature. He appreciated and extolled the achievement of the West more than Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore. Romain Rolland writes, "Being of a stronger vitality and more sensitive to the appeal of forces than Tagore and Gandhi who were oppressed by the frenzy of movement and noise and by the whole European mechanism, Vivekananda was at his ease in it, least at first he succumbed to its exciting intoxication and

(37) Romain Rolland, Life of Swami Vivekananda, P.32
(38) R.Ramkrishnan, Swami Vivekananda-Awakener of Modern India, P.54
his first feeling was of juvenile acceptance, his admiration knew no bound."(39)

On knowing that the Parliament of Religions would not open till 1st week of September and that none could be a delegate to it without any credential, he felt utterly disappointed, but resigning himself to the will of the Providence, he did not abandon his hope all together. He went to Boston which was less costly than Chicago. At Boston he was acquainted with prof. John Wright of Harvard University, who having been eclipsed before the profoundity of Swami Vivekananda's scholasticism asked him to attend the Parliament of Religions at Chicago and represent his nation there. Of the professor Swami Vivekananda himself writes, 'He urged upon me the necessity of going to the Parliament of Religions, which he thought would give me an introduction to the nation.'(40)

On coming to know that Swami Vivekananda was not officially accredited and had no credentials to attend the Parliament of Religions, he said, "To ask you, Swami, for your credentials is like asking the sun to state its right to shine."(41)
And there after, the professor wrote a letter of introduction for Swami Vivekananda to the chairman of the Parliament of Religions stating there in "Here is a man, who is more learned than all our learned professors put together."(42)

The Parliament of Religions opened on 11, September, 1893. The hero now entered the fort. But he was not hero-conscious

(39) Romain Rolland, Life of Swami Vivekananda, P.34
(40) Monmohan Ganguly, Swami Vivekananda-A Study, P.39
(41) R.Ramkrishnan,Swami Vivekananda,Awakener of Modern India,P.56
(42) Swami Budhananda, Vivekananda-His Call to the Nation,P.12
To himself he was an obedient messenger of his Master and his motherland. He would vindicate the cause of his motherland on the world platform. He would represent nothing—no creed, no sect, no community but India as a whole. Despite all her creeds and communities India is one nation which formed his subject matter and nationalism was his motto. That is why Romain Rolland has observed, 'The man represented nothing and every thing— the man belonging to no sect but rather to India as a whole.'

Towards the afternoon, Swami Vivekananda's turn came. It was a momentous occasion for him. As he stood up on the dias and bowed to Saraswati, the Goddess of learning, there came a new force into his body. He forgot his ownself. He was not Narendra or Vivekananda, he was some bodyelse or somethingelse — 'The soul of India, the echo of the Rishes, the voice of Ramkrishna, the mouthpiece of the resurgent Time—spirit.'

Surveying the entire assemblage with his captivating eyes, he addressed his audience as 'Sisters and Brothers of America.' Hardly had he uttered these five simplest words 'the solemnity of his voice, frankness of his expression, sincerity and candour of his heart spelled the entire environment. 'Seven thousand people rose to their feet as a tribute to something they knew not what.'

There was thunderous applause from the vast audience, which lasted for full two minutes. Every heart was touched and

(43) Romain Rolland, The Life of Swami Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel, P. 37
(44) R. Ramkrishnan, Swami Vivekananda—Awakener of Modern India, P. 57
(45) Swami Budhananda, Vivekananda—His call to the Nation, P. 14
thrilled to the core. The simple monk with a begging bowl had become the man of the hour.

Dr. Barrows, the president of the Parliament said, 'India, the Mother of religions was represented by Swami Vivekananda, the Orange-monk who exercised the most wonderful influence over his auditors.'(46)

The New York Herald remarked: 'Vivekananda was undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions; after hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation.'(47)

The Press remarked: 'Vivekananda's culture, eloquence, and his fascinating personality have given us a new idea of civilisation.'(48)

Another paper remarked: 'One of the most interesting personages is Professor Swami Vivekananda, a Hindu theologian of great learning, who made an address which captured the Congress, so to speak. There were bishops, and ministers of every Christian Church present and they were all taken by storm. The eloquence of the man with intellect beaming from his yellow face, his splendid English in describing the beauties of his time-honoured faith, all conspired to make a deep impression on the audience.'(49)

He was hailed as a cyclonic monk and as an

(46) Culled from Manomohan Ganguly, Swami Vivekananda-A Study P.40
(47) Culled from R.Ramkrishnan,Swami Vivekananda-Awakener of Modern India, P.59
(48) Culled from Manomohan Ganguly, Swami Vivekananda-A Study, P.40
(49) Ibid, P. 40
orator of superb talent. Life-size pictures of Swami Vivekananda adorned the streets of Chicago. It has been observed, "The great Eastern Star had illumined the West and men were in rapture. It was an hour of glory and victory of the great Hindu Sanatana Dharma, the Eternal Soul-science of India." (50)

All his subsequent speeches at the Parliament were listened to with utmost devotion and sincere appreciation. All his speeches had one common theme—universalism. While all the delegates to the Parliament spoke of their own religions, Swami Vivekananda spoke of a religion that was vast as the sea and deep as the ocean, sounding the death-knell of all religious persecution and fanaticism. He stressed on religious tolerance which is the corner-stone of Hindu religion. He vindicated India before the world. While glorifying Hinduism he asserted, "No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism." (51) He boldly declared that Hindu religion is the mother of all religions, based on the Vendantic principle of love, peace, tolerance and brotherhood. He held that Vedanta is the religion of all and stressed the need of spiritual ideal of India in the West. He concluded in his final speech on the platform of the Parliament of Religions that upon the banner of every reli-

(50) R. Ramkrishnan, Swami Vivekananda—Awakener of Modern India, P. 60
(51) Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel, P. 70
gion would soon be written -'Help not fight, Assimilation and not destruction, Harmony and peace and not Dissension.' Really this declaration was made as if he were a true prophet of religion which impressed the western bent of materialism by-far. The people of America discerned a new light beyond the darkhedges of sects, creeds, communities, churches and dogmas. Romain Rolland writes, "Each of other orators had spoken of his God of the God of his sect. He - he alone - spoke of all their Gods and embraced them all in the Universal Being. It was the breath of Ramkrishna, breaking down the barriers through the mouth of his great disciple." (52)

Swami Vivekananda made hectic tour of different parts of U.S.A., England and other continental countries. Every where he vindicated India, glorified Hinduism with its ancient sublime culture and captivated the minds of the millions of the people in the West. His tour to England was not less renowned. "His labours in England seemed to him to be even more successful than his labours in America. He plunged in to work with his accustomed zeal holding classes and giving public lectures."(53) Since England was the ruling country and India was the subject nation Swami Vivekananda left no stone unturned to convince the British people in favour of India. India's political subjection had agonised him and his heart craved for

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(52) Collection of Essays, Edited by J.M.Mohanty,Cal.1990, Topic:- A Great journey to the West by Romain Rolland,P.58
(53) R.Ramkrishnan, Swami Vivekananda-Awakener of Modern India, P. 64
emancipation. English people were deeply moved by his activities. The London press at different times worthily eulogized him. "Since the days of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, with the single exception of Kesheb Chandra Sen, there has not appeared in the English platform a more interesting Indian figure..." (54)

"Swami Vivekananda the popular Hindu monk whose physiognomy bore the most striking resemblance to the classic face of Buddha, denounced our commercial prosperity, our bloody wars and our religious intolerance..." (55)

Swami Vivekananda is a striking figure: His face lights up like that of a child. It is so simple, straightforward and honest." (56)

During his stay in England he had the opportunity of a talented lady—Miss Margaret Noble, to be drawn to him, who later on came to be known as Sister Nivedita— an ardent English disciple—a staunch Indophile. He had also the pleasure of meeting Max Muller, a great Vedic savant of the West.

His preachings were "unique combination of rationalism and ancient mysticism of the doctrines of Vedas and Upanishads and the knowledge of the scientific age of spiritual values and worldly realities. It breathed a spirit of catholicism and tolerations. Vivekananda represented ancient divine wisdom, medieval devotion and modern rationalism."

(54) Quoted in R.Ramkrishnan, Swami Vivekananda—Awakener of Modern India, P. 64
(55) Ibid, P. 64-5
(56) Ibid, P. 65
He placed Hinduism on a high pedestal, resisting the onslaught of Christianity and Islam. He inspired courage, confidence, devotion, faith and national pride. *(57)* In the words of V.P. Varma "The triumphant marches of Swami Vivekananda - the Hindu Napoleon in the American continent and Europe, demonstrated to the people that Hinduism had grown once more vigorous and was intent upon making a spiritual, moral and cultural philosophical propaganda in the world. The new imperialism of America and Europe met with their counter attack from Asia.* (58)

Swami Vivekananda vindicated Hindu religion before the world and Hinduism regained its old vitality." With his preachings of Vedantism, Hinduism stepped on to a new phase of evangelism and it was called aggressive Hinduism by Sister Nivedita. *(59)* His militant presentation of Hindu thought and his courageous proclamation that 'Vedanta is the religion for all' gave the Hindus a sense of pride in their religion. He was the first to interpret living Hinduism in all its aspects to the civilized world in a way which immediately brought recognition to its greatness. His bold proclamation before the world in support of the superiority of the sublime Hindu culture and civilization infused a refreshing boldness and consciousness of inherent strength among the Hindus, whose attitude was then characterised with a tone of apology and inferiority towards Western culture and civilization. He raised India to the eyes of the world and therefore is called,

*(57)* B.N. Luniya, *Evolution of Indian Culture*, P. 494
*(58)* V.P. Varma, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, P. 617
*(59)* B.N. Luniya, *Evolution of Indian Culture*, P. 494
the 'Patriot saint of India'.

In fact Swami Vivekananda's appearance on the world scenario ushered in a new era in the history of evolution of Hindu culture. It marked the beginning of the waking up of India from the stupor and stagnation in to which it had fallen for centuries together. The whole of India in the long run awoke to a mystical height and there came the consciousness of its superior identity and worth as a nation and its importance in the comity of nations. His success in the West as the exponent of the spiritual message of India was a surprising shock to the detractors of Indian culture and a stimulating leaven to its enthusiastic protagonist. India, it was felt, was not certainly face to face with its cultural doom when a pure and authentic exponent of it could draw so much of acclamation at the hands of the races that dominated the world at a time. It resulted in the resuscitation of the national sense of self-respect. (60)

After a long period of strenuous campaign in the West Swami Vivekananda heard his beloved motherland calling him. India had always been the soul of Vivekananda's life, the queen of adoration as described by Sister Nivedita. When he left for India he was overwhelmed with the love for his motherland as a child feels on returning to the lap of its mother after a long separation. To a Western friend who asked him about his feelings in regard to India after his experience in the West, he said "India I loved before as I came

(60) Swami Tapasyananda, Nationalistic and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda, P. VII
away (to the West). Now the very dust of India has become very holy to me. The very air is now to me very holy, it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Tirtha."(61) Surely was Swami Vivekananda a paragon among the patriots, whose love for his motherland was extraordinary.

Triumphal Return - the Climax of the Evolution of His Nationalist Personality:

When Swami Vivekananda came back India gave him the honour of an unprecedented magnitude. His roaring success in the West was matter of intense pride and gratification for every Indian. People throughout the country were aflame with overwhelming enthusiasm. He was no more an unknown sannyasin. In every city - big or small, committees were formed to give him grand ovation. An Indian newspaper reported, "Swami Vivekananda left India a pauper and returned a prince. We refer not to material resources but to popular esteem."(62)

As a matter of fact when he came back to India he was received with grand ovation. The welcome took almost the dimension of a mass movement. His glorious return after the great conquest of the West represented a national revival and heralded a new phase of nationalism. After the establishment of British power in India this was a major stirring of

(61) Quoted in R. Ramkrishnan, Swami Vivekananda - Awakener of Modern India, P.71

(62) The Indian Nation, 1817, Vivekananda in Indian News papers, P. 357
the spirit of nationalism, which sustained it tempo till India's independence in 1947. As Romain Rolland has observed, The Swami "replied to the frenzid expectancy of the people by his message to India, a conch sounding the resurrection of the land of Ram, of Siva, of Karna and calling the heroic spirit, the immortal atman to march to war. He was a general, explaining his plan of campaign and calling his people to arise and enmasse, "My India arise! where is your vital force? In your immortal soul."(63)

It was after his heroic return from the West that Swami Vivekananda's spirit of nationalism reached the zenith of excellence. It assumed the shape of wild fire. It influenced the mass as magic spell. He gave a clarion call to the nation which had been debased to political serfdom and economic stagnation, that "suddenly realised that it had not to bend its head down in shame, inferiority and defeatism but that it could hold up its head in legitimate pride and absolute confidence."(64) He had wiped off from India's forehead every mark of despair and anguish. He kindled a new zeal and fervour for struggle for freedom in every corner of India.

Ceylon had the honour of first receiving the triumphant hero as the prophet of Indian nationalism in January 15, 1897. None but Swami Vivekananda knew better

(63) Quoted in Swami Budhananda, Vivekananda - His Call to the Nation, P. 16

(64) R.Ramkrishnan, Swami Vivekananda - Awakener of Modern India, P.72
the beat of India's pulse. He knew that the Indian genius had its roots in spiritualism and he had the capacity to awake it. He had told to a friend in the West "India must listen to me. I shall shake India to her foundation. I shall send an electric thrill through her national veins. India will receive me in triumphs."(65)

Swami Vivekananda's idea of nationalism fully manifested itself in the lectures he delivered in reply to the addresses of welcome that were presented to him on his return to India, when he travelled from Colombo to Almora and Punjab to Kashmir. These lectures are the "perennial source of patriotic inspiration scintillating with the greatest spiritual ideal of the nation."(66) These lectures have been embodied in a volume- 'Lectures From Colombo to Almora'. These lectures are really unique in respect of the fact that they are only lectures, Swami Vivekananda delivered on Indian soil, while all the rest, dealing with various aspects of Vedanta, were delivered from world platforms in America and England. Therefore it is in these lectures that we come-across Vivekananda's nationalistic fervour and realise the way in which his spiritual ideology shaped his nationalistic zeal. These lectures show how Swami Vivekananda was convinced that emancipation of the masses and the removal of their misery and suffering were impossible without the attainment of freedom and nationhood by India. Hence his spiritual

(65) Quoted in R.Ramkrishanan, Swami Vivekananda-Awakener of Modern India, P. 73

(66) Swami Tapsyananda, Nationalistic and Religious lectures of Swami Vivekananda, P. VIII
philosophy had a deeply nationalistic dimension.

In fact Swami Vivekananda's lectures from 'Colombo to Almora' was an encomium on nationalism, which will exhilarate the Indians for all times to come. It is a perennial source of inspiration to awake and arise and acquire national identity - its unity and solidarity. Hence it is said 'The lectures from Colombo to Almora is the Gita of the present day, meant to rouse millions of Tamosic Arjunas to hard work and pussiant vigour.' (67)

In his first speech at Colombo Swami Vivekananda's nationalistic personality reached its apex. He attributed his grand success in the West to the cheers and goodwill of his motherland. He said that the idea that his motherland is a sacred place - a Punnya Bhumi - was a traditional belief in him, but having seen the world at large and the life of the people in other parts of the world, what was a mere belief in him had become a firm conviction. Recalling the glory and spiritual nationalism of India he said, "If there is any land on this earth that lay claim to be the blessed Punnya Bhumi, to be the land to which souls on this earth must come to account for Karma, the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above-

(67) V.P. Varma, Modern Indian Political Thought, P. 642

(68) Swami Tapsyananda, Nationalistic and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda, P. 12
all, the land of introspection and of spirituality—it is India." (69) He stated that in the past from here had proceeded great ideas of religions and spirituality to all the surrounding countries and in future too, the waves that would spiritualise the materialistic civilization and quench the burning fire of the materialism in other parts of the world, was to originate in India.

To Swami Vivekananda, India nationalism is divine in inspiration and spirit although he talked of Hindu nationalism. In highlighting the divine aspect of our national life he said, "........ there is not one race on this earth to which the world owes so much as to the patient Hindu, the mild Hindu. "The mild Hindu" some times is used as an expression of reproach but if ever a reproach concealed a wonderful truth, it is in the term "the mild Hindu" who has always been the blessed child of God."(70) However Swami Vivekananda meant by Hindu something different from what is normally meant by Hindu—people of a particular religious persuasion.

Ours is a multireligious country. This diversity of religion has severely told upon the national solidarity, for which India has suffered a lot. To achieve unity among the people of various sects and faiths and to bridge the gulf of invidious communal distinction, Swami Vivekananda interpreted the word 'Hindu' in its original form

(69) Swami Vivekananda, Lectures From Colombo to Almora, P. 3
(70) Ibid, P. 3
and explained its original application. As he said, "The word 'Hindu' by which it is the fashion now a days to style ourselves, has lost all its meaning, for this word merely meant, those who lived on the other side of the river 'Indus' (in Sanskrit the Sindhu). This name was murdered in to 'Hindu' by the ancient Persians and all people living on the other side of the river Sindhu were called by them Hindus. Thus this word has come down to us and during the Mohammedean rule we took up the word ourselves. There may not be harm in using the word of course but as I have said it has lost its significance, for, you may mark that all the people who live on the other side of the Indus in modern times, do not follow the same religion as they did in ancient times. The word therefore covers not only Hindus proper, but Mohammedans, Christians, Jains and other people who live in India. I therefore would not use the word Hindu. What word we should use then ? The other words which alone we can use are either Vaidikas-the followers of Vedas or better still Vedantists - the followers of Vedanta."

Explaining the cause of India's survival in the world Swami Vivekananda said that great ideas have spread from several ancient people like the Greeks, the Romans, the Persians etc. as also from modern nations. But it was as a camp follower of their conquering armies that the ideas contributed by them had penetrated in to different nations. But India had never been a conquering race, carrying

(71) Lectures From Colombo to Almora by Swami Vivekananda Page. 17
fire and sword to helpless people, vanquished in war. Therefore India has survived as a nation in the world during these several millennia inspite of foreign conquest and subjections, while those nations, depending on military might had passed away long ago after a short period of meteoric existence of exultant and exhuberant dominance of a wicked national life.

In his subsequent speeches Swami Vivekanananda exhorted Indians to recollect their spiritual heritage and not to condemn their social and cultural past and not take to a life of imitation of the West. India has a glorious heritage. In religion and philosophy it had been the teacher of the world allthorugh the ages. Even today India has retained her genius in this respect. Revival of spirituality has always been the prelude to the revival of cultural and polilical life in India. For, "Spirituality is the soul of India. Its enhencement has always been the sure way to greatness and its erosion, the way to national suicide." (73)

Swami Vivekanananda convinced the people that Hinduism had maintained its vitality through its capacity for absorption. It has been aggressive now and then, but its fundamental attitude was one of incorporation of the best elements of the system and forces it had to encounter. The secrets of its longevity lay in its catholic and constructive capacity for absorption. He said, "We must grow according to our nature. Vain is to attempt the lines of action that foreign societies have engrafted upon us, it is

(72) Swami Tapasyananda, Nationalistic and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda, P. 12-13
(73) Ibid-P.VIII
impossible, glory unto God that it is impossible, that we can not be twisted and tortured in the shape of other nations. I do not condemn the institution of other races; they are good for them but not for us."(74)

From his study of the world history Swami Vivekananda expounded a theory regarding the survival of the nations and he applied it to explain the cause of India's survival in spite of all the disasters that threatened to destroy it. He said that human history shows that every nation has to make a contribution of its own in a chosen field for the general advancement of humanity and that when it ceases to do so it decays and dies. "Nature effaces it off to make way for more vigorous and younger races to take up the role. It is a natural practice to get rid of an atrophied part of an organism and let others to take up its function."(75)

There had been great nations in the past - the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greek and the Romans etc., whose civilization were contemporaneous with that of India but they have all disappeared from the face of the earth and the regions where they flourished are occupied by people whose culture and national history have no continuity with those of these ancient people. The reason for it, according to Swami Vivekananda is the fact that they ceased to fulfil their national purpose which were mostly political, social, military etc. After short periods of national

(74) Swami Vivekananda, India and Her Problems, P.102-3

(75) Swami Tapasyananda, Nationalistic and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda, P.VIII
life they lost their hold on the national theme which made
them great and this led to their gradual decay and ultimate
destruction at the hands of the more vigorous people.

India also had her national theme through the whole of its history, the beginning of which is beyond the
capacity of man to know. That theme of India's specialisation was spiritualism, which meant the adoption of a way of life
that led to an immediate perception of the truth of the Atma
and of God even in this embodied state. All through her
history in spite of foreign invasions and subjections India
had been producing man with spiritual insight and from this
country had gone forth waves of movements that had brought
spiritual light to the nations of the world.

Swami Vivekananda stressed that even today India retains this capacity. It was during the early days of
British occupation, when India was threatened with cultural effacement at the hands of the victorious West that a great
spiritual personality was born in the person of Sri Ram-
krishna. Thus in spite of political subjection and economic
impoverishment India has all through the ages been keeping
herself alive as a nation. The moment India abandoned its
spiritual ideal - acceptance of spiritual essence in man
and the world as the goal of human life - its national life
was threatened with imminent extinction. "Therefore my
friends," he said, "the way out is that first and foremost

(76) Swami Tapasyananda, Nationalistic and Religious 
Lectures of Swami Vivekananda, P.IX
we must keep a firm hold on spirituality, that inestimable gift, handed down to us by our ancient forefathers............
Therefore whether you believe in spirituality or not, for the sake of national life you have to get a hold on spirituality and keep to it. Then stretch the other hand out and gain all you can from other races, but every thing must be subordinated to that one ideal of life and out of that a wonderful glorious future India will come. I am sure it is coming - a great India than ever was."(77)

Swami Vivekananda's speeches had tremendous influence upon the mind of the people. It inculcated a Hindu feeling of nationalism among the people. 'His wonderful speeches as a divine orator and a defender of religion of his people,' wrote Bipin Chandra Pal, 'had an immediate warm response in India, inspiring the national consciousness, shaping in us and giving it new strength.'(78)

Swami Vivekananda warned the Indians to steer their nationalism very carefully between the two sources of dangers—the scylla of Western materialism and the charybdis of Eastern obscurantism. Spirituality is the cultivation of the great ideals taught in the Gita and Upanishads in such a way that they are reflected in our individual and national life. The practice of village customs, caste rules, don't-touchism, irrational usages in eating and drinking—these have nothing to do with spirituality. They do not represent the eternal

(77) Swami Vivekananda, Lectures From Colombo to Almora, P.54
(78) B.C. Pal, Memoirs of My Life and Time, Vol-2, P.274-75
values. Too much insistence on these externals to the detriment of real and eternal spiritual principles expounded in the Gita and the Upanishads had been the main baneful influence that had vitiated the life of the people. When Vivekananda exhorted the people to retain their hold on our spiritual ideals he did not ask them to relapse in to this nightmare of social and religious obscurantism, but to be forward-looking and to go ahead without forgetting the great teachings of the Gita and Upanishads. To quote Sister Nivedita, "To his mind Hinduism was not to remain a stationary system, but to prove herself capable of embracing and welcoming the whole modern development."

Swami Vivekananda said that we have to learn plenty of things from the West in the fields of organisation, science, politics and technology for the uplift of our social and economic conditions. Our deficiency in these respects was largely the result of the mania for exclusiveness and avoidance of contact with the external world that crept in to the soul of the nation sometimes back in its history. When the world marched forward with science and technology India remained smug in its own shell, glorifying itself in its don't-touchism, caste-obsession and kitchen religion. This kind of orthodoxy should go and India shall acquire the progressive spirit of the West without losing its moorings in the Gita and Upanishads. However progressivism must be informed and directed by sensitiveness to spiritual values. Only then a wonderful glorious future India

(79) Sister Nivedita, The Master As I Saw Him, P.199
would come— an India greater than ever she was. As Dr. Radhakrishnan has said, "No religion can hope to survive if it does not satisfy the scientific temper of our age, sympathise with its social aspiration and faster the unity of the world."

Swami Vivekananda was a great optimist. He waited for the day when the mighty minds would arise and go forth from India to the ends of the world to teach spirituality and renunciation—those ideas, which had come from the forests of India and belonged to the soil of India alone.

Swami Vivekananda criticised the Indian national congress of those days because it did not make any positive and constructive efforts for the betterment of the lot of the masses. In an interview Ashwini Kumar Datta asked him, "But have you no faith in what congress is doing?" Swami Vivekananda said, "No, I have not, but, of course, something is better than nothing, and it is good to push the sleeping nation from all sides to wake it up. Can you tell me what the congress has been doing for the masses? Do you think merely passing a few resolutions will bring you freedom? I have no faith in that. The masses must be awakened first. Let them have full meals and they will workout their own salvation. If congress does anything for them, it has my sympathy." (81)

(80) Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, P. 15
Swami Vivekananda popularised the concept of freedom among the people. However he identified political freedom with spiritual freedom. He said that political freedom preceeds spiritual freedom. He was a devout worshipper at the shrine of individual freedom. He declared, "Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, growth and wellbeing; where it does not exist the man, the race and the nation must go down; any clan or caste or nation or institution which bars the power of free thought and action of an individual, so long as it does not injure other, is devilish and must go down." (82) It has been observed, "Swami Vivekananda's heroic soul always yearned for freedom. Although primarily, he taught the concept of spiritual freedom, this gospel was bound to result in the popularisation of other aspects of freedom, including the political freedom as well. Some of the terrorists and nationalists of Bengal learnt the value and sanctity of freedom from his poem - Songs of the Sannyasin." (83)

Along with individual freedom Swami Vivekananda also stressed the need of equality of all men. To him inequality stands as the greatest bar for the promotion of brotherhood among all men. So he voiced his great concern against all inequalities - social, political and economic, that shatter the unity of human society. Therefore Manomohan Ganguly writes, "Swami Vivekananda, always in thought and action strove hard

(82) Manomohan Ganguly, Swami Vivekananda- A Study, P.69-70
(83) V.P. Varma, Modern Indian Political Thought, P.101
to build the superstructure of India's salvation in which will reign for ever, Equality, Fraternity and Liberty." (84)

Emerson, a Western mystic voiced his doctrine of 'Shakti' when he said, "The world always to the energetic." (85) Like him Swami Vivekananda said, "What the world wants to day is heroic men and women...." (86) Thus with the concept of liberty, equality and fraternity, Swami Vivekananda also propounded his theory of strength and fearlessness that received enormous support from all corners of the society. It appealed to them so much that the people accepted it as their creed without a least of hesitation. He stated that we have been degraded only because of the fact that we have lost our faith in ourselves. We have become very soft and weak. That is why a handful of foreigners had ruled over millions of us for centuries and we had succumbed to servitude and serfdom. They had commanded us only because they had tremendous faith in themselves. In the national minds of Europe there flows tremendous stream of man's faith in themselves. They had reduced us to the level of hewers of wood and drawers of water for centuries. But now we must awake and arise to resist it. We had a gigantic strength in ourselves. "What our country wants", said Swami Vivekananda, "are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic will which nothing can resist, which can penetrate in to mysteries and secrets of the

(84) Manomohan Ganguly, Swami Vivekananda - A Study, P. 72
(85) Quoted in T. L. Vaswani, The voice of Vivekananda, P. 7
(86) Ibid, P. 7-8
universe and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion even if it meant going down to bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face."(87)

Swami Vivekananda asked his countrymen to be bold and fearless and not to yield to weakness of any sort. To him weakness is the bitterest enemy of man. This weakness can be overcome by the cultivation of strength and not by brooding over weakness. Since man is the son of God - spark of Absolute Brahma, the source of all strength and power, he can never be weak. It is only delusion that makes him weak. This false fear will vanish if we put our faith in the Upanishads. Vedanta is the source of all strength, the store-house of all power. "If there is one word that you find coming like a bomb from the Upanishads, bursting like a bombshell upon mass of ignorance, it is the word, fearlessness."(88)

If a man shakes off his fear and awakes to his height he can come to know himself and his enormous strength. Weakness leads to misery. It is the cause of slavery and suffering. As he said, "Strength is life, weakness is death. Strength is felicity, life is eternal, immortal. Weakness is constant strain and misery, weakness is death."(89) He further said that unless every Indian puts up courage and fearlessness, India can not achieve any success. Success comes to acting and daring man. Courage, confidence and will power is the only

(87) Swami Vivekananda, Lectures From Colombo to Almora, P.92
(89) Ibid, Vol-II, P.3
key to success and man has a world of success to achieve.

Swami Vivekananda also advocated his theory of struggle and resistance. Explaining this theory he said, "Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances, tending to press it down." So to him, life is nothing but struggle - struggle against all adverse circumstances that puts an end to all miseries in life. This theory of struggle and resistance began to gain the ground among the Indian masses and provided an impetus to national struggle for freedom.

Swami Vivekananda encouraged the Indians in the midst of all national hazards and hurdles and asked them not to be disheartened. He infused new hopes and aspirations into the hearts of his countrymen by saying, "It is same India, which has withstood the shocks of centuries of hundreds of foreign invasions, of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs. It is the same land which stands firmer than any rock in the world with its undying vigour, indestructible life. Its life is of the same nature as the soul without beginning and without end, immortal and we are the children of such a country."

Swami Vivekananda said that the then prevailing predicament of India should not upset the people. It was not a curse rather a boon in disguise, which presaged the emergen-

(90) Quoted in Swami Gambhirananda, A Short Life of Swami Vivekananda, P.119

(91) Swami Vivekananda, Lectures From Colombo to Almora, P.194
ce of a new India with new life and hope. "A mighty tree produces a beautiful ripe fruit. That fruit falls on the ground. It decays and rots and out of that decay springs the root and the future tree perhaps mightier than the first one. This period of decay through which India have passed was all the more necessary. Out of this decay would emerge the new India of the future, it is sprouting its first leaves are already out and a mighty gigantic tree, the Urdhamula, is here, already beginning to appear and it is about that that I am going to speak to you."

The problems of our country according to Swami Vivekananda are more complicated than those of any other country. Here there are people of diverse races, speaking different language, following manners and customs of utmost diversity. The only common ground that we have, according to Swami Vivekananda, is our sound traditions - our religion. There must be therefore, the recognition of one religion through out the length and breadth of the country. People must be aware of those common grounds in the first place. All these diversity of race, religion and manners would melt away before the unifying power of religion. Unification of religion, therefore, is the initial step for the building up of future of Indian nation. In Europe political ideas form the basis of national unity. In Asia religious ideals form the basis of national unity. The unity in religion, therefore

(92) Swami Vivekananda, Lectures From Colombo to Almora, P. 95
is absolutely necessary as the first condition of the future of India." (93)

To Swami Vivekananda this unity of religion is not a very difficult job. It is rather very easy if the people would be made to understand the true end of religion. Whatever may be the religion, its ultimate end is to lead man to salvation. A man, to which ever religion he may belong, his ultimate aim is salvation or reunion with God. As he said, "The ultimate goal of all mankind, the aim and end of all religions, is but one - reunion with God, or, what amounts to the same, with the divinity, which is every man's nature." (94) As he further said, "The ideal of all religions, all sects, is the same - the attaining of liberty or salvation, the cessation of misery." (95)

For further conviction of the people Swami Vivekananda held that religions may be different but same truth and same God reigns in the heart of all religions. As he said, 'One Light shines in all; One Light comes through glasses of different colours; One Truth reigns in the heart of all religions; One Truth is expressed in different languages by different religions.' (96)

The aim of Swami Vivekananda was to build up a new progressive India out of the debris of superstitions and ignorance that enveloped her. Unless the masses are free

(93) Swami Vivekananda, Lectures From Colombo to Almora, P.196
(94) Quoted in Swami Gambhirananda, A Short Life of Swami Vivekananda, P.116
(95) Ibid, P.116
(96) Quoted in T.L. Vaswani, Voice of Vivekananda, P.60
from the encircling gloom of ignorance they can not discern
the new light of life in the horizon. Education is the light
that dispells the gloom far off and makes life conducive to
novelty and newness of thought. It inculcates new strength
of character among the people and induces one to be strong
and self-reliant. "We want that education by which character
is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is
expanded and by which one can stand on one's own feet."(97)

Swami Vivekananda said that the glory of India
was ebbing away, culture decaying not because of her inferiority
of intellect nor of dexterity. The chief cause of
her extinction was hypnotism that had gripped her. "All
that is needed is that she should dehypnotise herself and
wake up from her age-long sleep to take her true rank in
the hierarchy of nations......The national ideals of India
are renunciation and service. Intensify her in those
channels and the rest will take care of itself."(98)

According to Swami Vivekananda the flame of our
nationalism had not died down. It was still flickering in
the tempestuous horizon. All the stresses and storms of our
national life had not put down the flame. It had survived
all the trials and tribulations. "Hidden under the ashes of
apparent death, the fire of our national life is yet smoulder­ing."(99) Swami Vivekananda's stirring speeches and

(97) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-V, P. 342
(99) Ibid, Vol- V, P. 461
writings set the minds of the common people ablaze with nationalistic feelings. They saw beyond the century-long dark clouds of lethargy and stagnation a great future beckoning them.

To Swami Vivekananda, India looked like a big dilapidated building and at first sight one would feel that there was no hope for India. But a nation would not be destroyed until the essential principle for which it had stood through the ages was destroyed. It was just like a man, not ceasing to function even if his coat had been stolen away twenty times, because the coat was unessential. India had been invaded by several races and it had been despoiled of its wealth. But the soul of India had not yet been seriously affected. Its soul consisted in religion. There would be no more India if the people changed their religion and their institutions, because that was the vitality of that race.

Swami Vivekananda said, "Inspite of poverty and loss of freedom India is holding fast to the idea that the real is God and every thing else is but His shadow. She clings to this like a grim death." (100) So India was still living and like a patient who kept up his vitality amidst a crippling illness she had still hopes of a resurrection from her present state of downfall and degeneration.

The uplift of India was to be attempted through vitalising her religious life which formed the soul of the

(100) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-VIII, P.73
nation. But there was no reason why India should necessarily be poverty stricken. An ascetic ideal should not be imposed for the benefit of a few sages. That would be 'Tyranny of the sages'. This had to change. Along with spiritual administration steps were to be taken for improving the material condition of life as well.

Swami Vivekananda's nationalism aimed at all-round development of the nation. Spiritual progress is incomplete without material development. So he stressed the need of developing the resources of the country and utilising them properly. For this purpose he said that Western scientific and technical method should be acquired. As Manomohan Ganguly has remarked, "We have often found the Swamiji to impress upon his countrymen the necessity of developing the resources of the country; he expressed the desire to give effect to it by sending young men to Japan and America for technical education."(101) He also put emphasis on the industrial development of the country. "Like Tilak and other Indian nationalist of the late 19th century and early 20th century, Swami Vivekananda saw that colonialism was retarding the economic and particularly industrial development of the country. Therefore visualising real patriotism in tireless work on development of its industry, science and education."(102) Swami Vivekananda wrote that 'one must not depend on any foreign help. Nation

(101) Manomohan Ganguly, Swami Vivekananda-A Study, P.64
(102) I.P. Chelisheve, Swami Vivekananda-Studies in Soviet Union, Published on 150th Birth anniversary of Sri Ramkrishna, P. 53
like individual, must help themselves. This is real patriotism. If a nation can not do that its time has not yet come. It must wait..... the new light must spread all over India. With this end .....(we) must work."(103)

Thus, though Swami Vivekananda was a monk in yellow robe, he turned out to be a nationalist of highorder. It is evident from his speeches and writings. Love for his country formed the very philosophy of his life. In all his speeches and writings, he espoused the cause of India, her religion, her culture, her civilization. In fact he was the champion of Indian spiritual nationalism. His speeches and writings had tremendous effect, "which apparently without his knowledge fell in so many cases like seed upon soil prepared for it and have sprung up already in widely distant parts of India in to hearts and lives of devotion to the motherland."(104)

Swami Vivekananda did not openly advocate the cause of India's freedom. That was partly due to the fact that he was a sannyasin- a dedicated monk and he did not like to get himself entangled in political and legal controversies. Another reason was that Swami Vivekananda wanted to devote his whole time and energy to the cause of the emancipation and uplift of the poor and downtrodden. That is why he did not join the body politics of the country, whereby he would have been certainly arrested and put in

(103) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-V, P.83
(104) Sister Nivedita, The Master As I Saw Him, P. 199
prison by the British power.

Swami Vivekananda not only travelled abroad and delivered stirring speeches to make the Indian masses arise and awake to achieve the nationalistic goal, he also organised the Ramkrishna Mission, which would carry out his plan of action and uplift his country and help in the act of nation building. He first established two principal centres - one near Calcutta and another at Mayabati near Almora, where young men, who joined the Ramkrishna Mission were trained as sannyasins (Renouncers of the worldly life) for religion and social welfare work. Thus an ancient and venerable institution came to be utilised for national service. The monks of the mission lived a life of dedication, engaging themselves in active service of the society and alleviating the suffering of the downtrodden. Besides, he started two papers - The Monthly, 'Prabudha Bharata' in English and 'Udbodhana' a Bengali fortnightly. His treatises and lectures were published in several volumes. The result was the tremendous spread and progress of the Ramkrishna movement all over the country, contributing for the synthesis and harmony among the various faiths and cults, denouncing poverty and superstitions, encouraging mass education and inspiring the people for national emancipation. As R.C. Muzumdar writes, "He (Swami Vivekananda) wanted to carry in to practice what he had so long preached by making

(105)B.N. Luniya, Evolution of Indian Culture, P.493
the workers devote themselves to an active life of service for the masses and thus to make the monastic organisation a potent instrument for social and national regeneration, by spreading education among the illiterate, helping them fight against poverty and disease, removing the social evils and inequities and raising them to a higher level of morality."(106) As Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao has also remarked, "Ramkrishna Mission is Vivekananda's greatest political contribution to the building up of 'New India'."(107)

(106) R.C. Muzumdar, Swami Vivekananda-A Historical Review, P. 66

(107) V.K.R.V. Rao, Swami Vivekananda- The Prophet of Vedantic Socialism, P. 248