CHAPTER - V

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S NATIONALISM AND NATIONAL FREEDOM
Swami Vivekananda was far off from the arena of politics. He had little faith in politics. As he said, "I do not believe in any politics. God and Truth are the only politics in the world, everything else is trash." He was a great mystic. He spent most of his time in deep study of Indian culture, spiritual literature and meditation. Yet he caught the imagination of the Indian masses. So immense was his inspiring personality that on his return to India from America he was asked by some young man to enter into the sphere of politics and inspire the people for freedom of the country. But his reply was, "I can get you freedom tomorrow, but will you be able to keep it? Where are the men? First create men and freedom will come automatically."

Swami Vivekananda had a very strong conviction that Acts of Parliament can not create proper men. It is religion alone that can do so. He thought man-making to be his first and foremost task to reach the goal of freedom of the country. 'First man and then freedom', was his conviction. If man is trained properly freedom will come automatically. As Sister Nivedita has observed, "He neither used the word 'nationality' nor proclaimed an era of 'nation-making' man-making was his primary task. But he was born a lover and the queen of his adoration was his motherland."

(1) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-V, P.95-96
(2) Quoted in Swami Vireswarananda, Our Duty towards Motherland, P.39
(3) Sister Nivedita, The Master As I Saw Him, P.69
Swami Vivekananda did not like to entangle himself in the practical politics of the country because, he thought that politics would not influence the mass as religion, which is the most vital force of our national life. As a true prophet of Hindu nationalism, he realised that the road to Indian nationalism lies through spiritualism. So he wanted to spiritualise the life of the people of India and foster nationalism thereby. Hence he had no connection with politics. As he wrote in Sept. 1894, "I am no politician or a political agitator, I care only for spirit..... So you must warn the Calcutta people that no political significance be ever attached falsely to any of my writings or saying..... I have said a few harsh words in honest criticism of Christian government in general, but that does not mean that I care for or have any connection with politics."

However, having assumed the garb of a Sannyasin, Swami Vivekananda championed the cause of freedom movement of the country. As Jawaharlal Nehru remarked, "He(Swami Vivekananda) kept away from politics and disapproved of his politician, but again and again he laid stress on freedom.....and the raising of the masses." Prof. Hiren Mukerjee also observed, "......in his own unique way, Vivekananda could, if any one person did, give a vibrant

(4) Quoted in V.P. Varma, Modern Indian Political Thought, P. 111
(5) Jawaharlal Nehru, Discovery of India, P. 315
unequivocal, people oriented colour to subject India's nationalism and will ever be remembered as one of the supreme figures in the annals of our freedom struggle.*

(A) RELIGION AS THE BASIS OF NATIONAL FREEDOM

Swami Vivekananda felt that if religion is understood by every body in its true perspective and its essence properly grasped, much of our miseries, mutual conflicts and social evils would be automatically resolved. He stressed on the necessity of religion specially in an age when the world is moving very fast in the fields of science and technology. He held that religion is the healthiest exercise that human mind can have. As he said, "Of all the forces that have worked and are still working to mould the destinies of all human race, none certainly, is more potent than that, the manifestation of which, we call religion." Religion is a great cementing factor yet unfortunately it has often become the cause of conflicts and dissensions among the people. However to integrate the vivisected Indian society and create a unified and viable nation, Swami Vivekananda sought to take advantage of religion. It has been pointed out, "He strove to interpret the religious tenents and dogmas of Hinduism in such a way as to place

(6) Prof. Hiren Mukerjee, Vivekananda and Indian Freedom P.4-5

religion at the defence of India's national interests to
(8) unite the people to fight for independence."

Swami Vivekananda held that religion may be different but the goal of all religions is the same. The paths only differ but they lead to the same destination. The contradictions posed by different faiths are not real but only apparent. These contradictions are like the different shapes of vessels that contain the same honey. To fortify his argument he has referred to verse of Chapter IV of the Bhagavad Gita that reads, "......In that way in which they worship Me, I give them fruit accordingly. O' Partha! which ever path is followed, a man ultimately comes and joins in to my path."

Swami Vivekananda says that the same truth can be found in every religion and that good and noble souls have been produced by every creed. He further maintained that every religion consists of three parts - its philosophy and details, its mythology and its rituals. The last two vary from one religion to the other. But there is essential identity in regard to the first. It is the ritualistic part of religions that becomes the point of conflict. Hence he laid stress on the need for the unity of all religions in India. Variation in religious belief, he said, is the sign of life, the essential trait of mankind, yet unity of reli-

(8) Swami Vivekananda - Studies in Soviet Union, Published on 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramkrishna, P.213

(9) The Gita, Chapter-IV, Sholoka-11
gion is the strength that our nation needed most.

Swami Vivekananda in emphasising on the unity of all religions stressed on the fact that the soul is one although the individuals differ. As he said, "There is but one soul throughout the universe, all is but one existence." The soul or spirit is absolute which is manifested in every thing in the universe and every being specially man. The same soul exists in men, to which ever creed or faith they may belong.

Bertrand Russell has written, "Diversities of manners and customs and traditions are on the whole a good thing, since they enable different nations to produce different types of excellence." In the same way Swami Vivekananda emphasised on the diversities of faith, beliefs, customs, practices and rituals or different individuals, professing different faith or religion. Such variety makes the society richer. Variety he felt to be the spice of life. Such variety need not be eliminated from the society. Sometimes some fanatics have attempted to eliminate this variety. But the result has always been disastrous. "As it is said, "Rousseau preached the doctrine of political equality which Robespierre took literally and result was the Reign of Terror which ultimately led to the emergence of Nepoleon, who swallowed the republic and declared himself emperor.

(10) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-III, P.188
(11) Bertrand Russell, Political Ideals, P.68
Marx's doctrine of classless society, somewhat loosely phrased, was taken seriously by Lenin, who while trying to put it into practice, made the breath-taking statement that he had no objection to extermination of the three-fourths of the world's population provided the remaining one-fourth were converted to marxism. So variety is to be retained and unity has to be sought amidst them. Unity is to be so achieved that variety would not be affected thereby.

Hence Swami Vivekananda while seeking national unity also sought unity in the midst of variety. This principle touched the Indian minds most and without losing their racial, religious or cultural identity they rallied round him like a swarm of bees. As a result deep sense of fellowfeelings, co-operation among the people of various sects and creeds, caste and race developed. This recognition of variety, as laid down by Swami Vivekananda, became a source of attraction for all and national unity became inevitable.

Swami Vivekananda explained his mind regarding the usefulness of imageworship. Other reforming institutions like Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj etc., vehemently opposed the cult of image-worship. But Swami Vivekananda upheld it boldly and said that it is a means to an end although not an end in itself. Although he considered that worship of image can not lead a man directly to Mukti.

(12) S.C. Sengupta, Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism, P.59
he did not disregard its utility. He considered it necessary for a common man to prepare his mind for the realisation of God. He realised its utility at the initial stage of spiritual progress. As he said, '.....it is a lowest stage; struggling to rise high, mental prayer is the next stage...' Image worship according to Swami Vivekananda is as necessary for realisation of God as infancy and childhood are essential for the maturity and wisdom of an old age. Idolatry can be wrong only if childhood and youth is a sin.

Swami Vivekananda was of course conscious of the fact that the mystery-mongering cult, the so called Yogism or magic had crept into the soil of India for long. Besides idolatry had also penetrated into the mind of the Hindus. Reformers and reforming organisations had sprang up in the country to rid Hinduism of such nuisences, yet he openly came out to justify idol-worship if not idolatry.

Swami Vivekananda studied the religious background of India and found that Hindu-Muslim unity is most essential for the sake of national freedom movement. Hence he fervently strove to bridge the gulf between the followers of the two major religions of the country, Hinduism and Islam. He tried to achieve this end by preaching the great Vedic concept of Advaitism or non-duality of soul or unity of universal existence. In 1898 he wrote

(14) Ibid, Vol-I, P.17
to Mahammed Sarfaraj Hussain, 'Advaitism is the religion of the future enlightened humanity. The Hindu may get the credit for arriving at it, earlier than other races... Yet practical Advaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one's own soul was never developed among the Hindus universally......my experience is that if any religion approaches to this equality, it is Islam alone.'

Thus by highlighting the genuine merit of Islamic faith, he wanted to draw the attention of the people of either sect and sought to eliminate the deep-seated distrust between the Hindus and the Muslims in India.

Swami Vivekananda further said in the same letter, "We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas nor the Bible nor the Koran, yet this has been done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. Mankind aught to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of the religion, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best."

The whole aim of Swami Vivekananda was to make our motherland a junction of the two great system - Hinduism and Islam - Vedantic brain and Islamic body. He hoped that in future-India there would be no conflict and bloodshed of the two faiths if they are so reconciled.

Swami Vivekananda's plan of Hindu-Muslim

(15) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-VI, P.415
(16) Ibid, Vol-VI, P.415
(17) Ibid, Vol-VI, P.416
unity closely approximated to that of Mohatma Gandhi - the Father of Indian Nation, who believed, "Without Hindu-Muslim unity there would be no progress for India." For national unity and independence he also sought to eliminate mutual distrust and doubts between the Hindus and the Muslims. As he said, "If the Hindus and the Muslims rid themselves of mutual distrust and fear there is no power that can stop their freedom. We are the makers of our own slavery." Therefore he appealed to all Indians to accept Hindu-Muslim unity as a "creed for all times and under all circumstances."

Swami Vivekananda's emphasis on religion for national reconstruction left tangible impact on the thought process of many freedom fighters. Although he was a Hindu monk, preaching certain form of Vedanta, it is so catholic that men of all faiths including atheists and agnostics, drew inspiration from his writings. His religion did not recognise any heaven beyond the earth, and lost the sight of temporal forces - racial or ethnic and joined the main-stream of spiritualism, that was purely Indian in character. This amply contributed to the growth of Indian spiritual nationalism. Hence it has been rightly pointed out, "Vivekananda's nationalism is so catholic that it is acceptable to men, professing different faiths, inhabiting

(18) Mahatma Gandhi, Young India, July 28, 1921
(19) Ibid, January 27, 1927
(20) Ibid, February 25, 1930
different regions and speaking different languages and yet it is distinctively Indian, it is as thoroughly Indian as the Ganga and Narmada. This Indianism of Swami Vivekananda became very prominent in the blood of the people and this Indianism sought to bring about a sort of cohesion among the people of different faiths, that paved the path for national emancipation in the long run.

(C) CULTURE AS THE BASIS OF NATIONAL FREEDOM

Swami Vivekananda explained that the word 'Hindu' is not a religious term. It really means the people who live on this side of the river 'Sindhu'. The Persian pronounced 'S' as 'H' and the Greeks 'H' as 'I'. So Hindu means the people, living on this side of the 'Indus', whatever may be their faith or creed or religious conviction. Hence India embraces in her infinite arms all the people of various faiths and cults with all greatness and glories in all ages of her history. But when India came under the British yoke the people forgot their own glory and were dazzled by the splendour of the West. As it is said, "Not to speak the dumb millions who were awe-struck by the all conquering prowess of the white races or of the English educated Indians, who were lured by Western culture, even men, versed in English learning like

(21) S.C. Sengupta, Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism, P.62
Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, spoke of the barrenness of Sanskrit grammar and Naya, Vedanta and Sankhya philosophies. There was a reaction against this tide of westernisation, but no one held aloft the torch of Indian culture with greater vigour than Swami Vivekananda, who carried the war into the enemy's camp."

Swami Vivekananda refuted the allegation that Indians are too much absorbed in their past by pointing out how they are too forgetful of their rich tradition. He also showed that though Indians have much to learn from the West, they have more to give to the Westerners. The successive waves of immigration into India have always been a turning point in the history of the nations that made incursions into this land from abroad. He said, "This is the one great truth, India has to teach to the world, because it is nowhere else. This is spirituality, the science of soul." The Western nations are no doubt more wealthy than India, yet that do not mean that they are superior to her in the matter of intellect or spiritual refinement. Ignorance and poverty are no doubt curses that are to be eradicated, yet hoarding of material wealth is often accompanied by intellectual arrogance and spiritual degradation.

Swami Vivekananda reinforced his aforesaid conclusions by delving deep into the remote past and

(22) S.C. Sengupta, Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism P.62
attempting a comparison between the West and East, and particularly Indian and the West. He said, "The whole of Asian civilization was first evolved on the plains near large rivers and on fertile soils, on the banks of Ganga, the Yangtseking and the Euphrates. The original foundation of all these civilization is agriculture and in all of them the Daivi nature (God-like) predominates. Most of the European civilization on the other hand originated either in the hilly countries or on the sea coast. Piracy and robbery formed the basis of this civilization; there the Asuri(Demoniac) nature is preponderant." Indeed when Europeans developed a rich culture, in Greece, the Helenic heritage would have lost but for the Arabs, who preserved it. Swami Vivekananda goes further and says that it was as a result of the crusade that Europe began to be civilized by coming in contact with Asian culture, specially Indian. In this way the Knight Templars learnt Advaita Vedanta and the Moors, a Mohammedan tribe, established a civilized kingdom in Spain. Even amongst the Asiatics, Indinas could claim distinction for their peaceful, tolerant attitude to life. Johavah, Hebrew God was an ugly deity, whom man had to propitiate in order to escape punishment. But the Aryans worshipped a God who was 'not only a supreme Being but...... the Father in heaven. This is the beginning of love.' This Aryan concept reached Palestine, where Jesus,

(25) Quoted in S.C. Sengupta, Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism, P.62-3
who was, rejected by the Jews, preached the doctrine of love saying that he and his father in the heaven are one.

Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches, emphasising on the inborn superiority of the Hindus, filled the Indian mind with pride and a sense of greatness of their old culture. The inferiority complex of the Hindus were removed. They were no longer ready to admit the vain superiority of the West. It steeled their determination to rise against the British and assert their independence. As Jawaharlal Nehru has pointed out, "He(Vivekananda) came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralised Hindus and gave it self-reliance and some roots in the past." Bipin Chandra Pal has also written, 'Influence of Swami Vivekananda was quite tremendous. It quickened our self consciousness far more.'

By establishing superiority of Indian culture over the West Swami Vivekananda tried to check the spread of Western influence in India. Blind imitation of Western way of living led to the spread of Western civilization very fast in India. Swami Vivekananda realised that without counteracting the Western influence and reviving the ancient Indian culture, reconstruction of India is not possible. So he voiced his concern against this blind imitation and appealed to the people of India that imitation is not civilization, it is weakness; it is an act of cowardice - a positive curse.

(26) Jawaharlal Nehru, Discovery of India, P. 338
(27) Bipin Chandra Pal, Indian Nationalism, P. 44
to nation-hood. As he repeatedly said, "......imitation, cowardly imitation never makes for progress." He held that man, seeking freedom and progress, never imitates, but revives what is his own, that has made the Chinese, the Japanese very great. As he said, "...... Japan and China even live to the present days, and there are signs even of revival among them. Their lives are like that of the phoenix, a thousand times destroyed but ready to spring up again more glorious."

So as the worthy heir of India, said Swami Vivekananda, we must revive our own glorious culture of the past and build a new India upon it. Imitation can never make us great. A Raja's dress (King's dress) can not make us Raja nor can an ass become a lion in lion's dress. In his article 'Modern India' contributed to 'Udbodhana', March 1899, he wrote, "O' India! with this mere echoing of others, with this base imitation of others, with this dependence on others, this slavish weakness......, wouldst thou.....scale the highest pinnacle of civilized greatness. Wouldst thou attain by means of thy disgraceful cowardice that freedom deserved only by the brave and heroic."

To make the people ashamed of their mean habit of imitating the West, which is contrary to their national character, Swami Vivekananda reminded them of their noble tradition of doing the most distinguished work of diffusing

(28) Lectures From Colombo to Almora, P.297
(29) Ibid, P.296
(30) Ibid, P.296-97
(31) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-IV, P.479
spiritual knowledge world over. He held that India was the only fountain-head of spiritualism and source of such knowledge. His country-men should not forget such century-long tradition and their contribution to the world progress. As he said, "Great works are to be done, wonderful powers have to be worked out, we have to teach other nations many things."

Thus Swami Vivekananda's appeal, warnings and admonitions against the base imitation of the West made people of India feel ashamed of such mean habit, and they began to think in the direction of their own national heritage and the national or the freedom movement got a concrete shape out of it.

(C) SPIRIT OF FREEDOM

Swami Vivekananda's heroic soul always craved for freedom. Freedom was the key-note of his spiritual philosophy. Though he stood for spiritual freedom, interpreting freedom like J.S. Mill 'he rose to the conception of liberty as free play for the spiritual originality with all its results in individual vigour and manifold diversity, which alone can constitute a rich balanced and developed society.' Though he primarily propagated spiritual freedom, the gospel resulted in the galvanisation of the passion for

(32) Lectures From Colombo to Almora, P.47
(33) Barker, Political Thought in England from 1849 to 1914, P.10
struggle for freedom of the nation in the long run.

Swami Vivekananda declared that freedom is the goal of all — from individual to universe. Everything and every being of the universe aspires for freedom. Therefore struggle for freedom is a universal phenomenon. As he said, "Freedom is the goal of the nature, sentient or insentient and consciously or unconsciously every thing is struggling towards that goal." All men and the entire nature is struggling to attain freedom. Even the whole planetary bodies are making movement and the wind is blowing to achieve the same goal, i.e., freedom. As he said, "All human life, all nature, therefore, is struggling to attain freedom.....To that goal the planet is moving and the air is blowing. Every thing is struggling towards that."

According to Swami Vivekananda the whole universe is but the manifestation of freedom. It is the result of the struggle for freedom. Freedom is life as without freedom there would be death. As he said, "There can not be life even in the plant without the idea of freedom."

So the nature of life is to make a search for freedom. This search is the religion or dharma of life. As he said, "Wherever there is life there is search for freedom. That freedom is same as God." Freedom is the sign of life. Without freedom there would be no life on earth. So he said,

(37) Ibid, Vol-I, P.336
(38) Ibid, Vol-I, P.337
"The idea of freedom you can not relinquish. Your action, your life will be lost without it."

To Swami Vivekananda freedom is the way to perfection. The whole world inorder to attain perfection needs freedom. A man who is free has enormous power to perfect the world, but a man, in bondage of any sort is not expected to make the world perfect. As he said, "If we are not free how can we make the world good and perfect?"

Hence according to Swami Vivekananda freedom that perfects the individual also perfects the universe and individual freedom is the basis of universal freedom.

Swami Vivekananda felt that freedom is the watch-word of Hindu philosophy. The entire Hindu philosophy is based on freedom. All faiths and sects of India propagate the same principle of freedom - freedom in all respects. He said, "The word freedom which is the watch-word of our religion really means freedom physically, mentally and spiritually." The great Upanishads - the source of Hindu philosophy and religions - stands for freedom. As he said, "Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watch-words of Upanishads."

To Swami Vivekananda, love for freedom is the trait with each man. It is his inborn quality.

(40) Ibid, Vol-I, P.109
(41) Ibid, Vol-V, P.216
(42) Ibid, Vol-III, P.238
It is his divine possession. A sort of divine force is always in operation within man to inspire him to be free. As he said, "Within ourselves this eternal voice is speaking for eternal freedom." But as we have been illusioned or hypnotised we fail to hear such voice within us and never feel our own nature. It exists only in our memory. As he said, "Freedom in man now a memory......." We have been altogether indifferent to it. But the first and foremost duty of each Indian is to free himself from illusion or dehypnotise himself to realise his own nature. As he said, "Every body is hypnotised already. The work of attaining freedom of realising one's own nature, consists in dehypnotisation." This illusion or hypnotisation is the root of all bondages that cause all misery. As long as we do not try to break off these fetters there is no light for us. We are to sink in misery. As he said, "Dependence is misery. Independence is happiness."

Swami Vivekananda declared that liberty is the first condition of growth and it is the condition in which the individual attains his bestself - his allround development. As he said, "Liberty is the first condition of growth." He advocated allround freedom - freedom in every sphere of life and championed the cause of perfect freedom. As he said, "Just as man must have liberty to think and

(43) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-II, P.325
(44) Ibid, Vol-VII, P.48
(45) Ibid, Vol-VI, P.126
(47) Ibid, Vol-IV, P.367
speak so he must have liberty in food, dress, and marriage and in every other things... (48)

Swami Vivekananda believed that freedom is beneficial both to the individual and the society. It is liberty that makes the individual and society progressive. Like J.S. Mill, he believed that "Intellectual and political freedom are in general beneficial both to society that permits them and to the individual that enjoys them... it produces and gives scope for a high type of moral character."

But Swami Vivekananda felt aggrieved to find that freedom which is the natural possession of men was beyond the reach of the people of India. Indians had been subject to slavery. Misery and hardship had beset the people, causing vital injury to their national life. He wanted to awaken the Indian masses so that they enjoy their legitimate right. As he said, "We have been slaves forever i.e. we have never been given to the masses of India to express their inner light which is their inheritance."

Swami Vivekananda urged the people of India to rise in revolt since freedom is our birth right, the very goal of a humanbeing. He held that it is our legitimate right or congenital claim to revolt against all bondages. As he said, "We are born rebel against this, we rebel and cry out ..... The first inkling of life on its

(48) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-IV, P.368
(49) G.H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory, P.708-9
(50) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-IV, P.440
higher level is in seeing this struggle within us to break the bond of nature and to be free. "Freedom O' Freedom! Freedom O' Freedom!" is the very song of the soul. He further said, "The fundamental principle is that there is eternal freedom for every one. Every one must come to it. We have to struggle, impelled by our desire to be free."

Explaining the method for the attainment of freedom by Indians, Swami Vivekananda emphasised on "Karma-Yoga...that lays down selflessness and sacrifice as the only way for achieving freedom. As he said, "Karma-Yoga.......intend to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works." This explanation inflamed the zeal of the people of India to sacrifice their life for freedom of the country.

Like Rousseau who said, "Man is born free but every where he is in chains," Swami Vivekananda declared, "Stand up and say I am the Master, the master of all, we forge the chain, we alone can break it." He also declared, "Be free and know once for all there is no chain for you." Like Rousseau who set the whole French society ablaze with his fiery speeches and statements, Swami Vivekananda inflamed the mind of the people of India by fiery speeches for revolution against all injustices - social, political and economic.

(51) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-I, P.335
(52) Ibid, Vol-V, P.282
(53) Ibid, Vol-I, P.111
(54) Rousseau, Social Contract (Opening sentence)
(55) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-VI, P.54
(56) Ibid, Vol-VI, P.4
Swami Vivekananda felt that freedom is our destination and we are born to reach that destination. In reaching this destination of life, we must lay down all our pleasures and comforts. Struggle for freedom is the most pious duty of man and each man must realise this duty. As he said, "What are we here for? We are here for freedom, for knowledge. We want to know in order to make ourselves free. That is our life: one universal cry for freedom.... the plant grows from the seed overturning the ground and raising itself up to the skies? What is the offering for the earth from the sun? What is your life? The same struggle for freedom.... The struggle with nature is going on. Many things will be crushed and broken in this struggle for freedom."

Swami Vivekananda further felt that we should devote all our time and energy whole-heartedly in our struggle for freedom. Failure in the struggle should not deter us from the struggle. We should dedicate our all - body and mind for achieving freedom. As he said, "How some people give all their energies, time, brain, body and every thing to become rich! They have no time for breakfast! Early in the morning they are out and at work! They die in attempt - ninety percent of them - and the rest when they make money can not enjoy it....... One can have the same amount of energy and struggle for freedom as one has for money. We know we have to give up money and all things when we die and yet see the amount of energy we can put forth for them. But.....

should we not put forth a thousand fold more strength and energy to acquire that which never fades, but which (freedom) remains to us forever?" 

Swami Vivekananda not only advocated individual freedom; he also warned his country-men against all evil forces that invariably endeavour to snatch away freedom from them and enslave them. Man should remain alert allalong. They must pay the price of eternal vigilence for the procurement and protection of their freedom. As he said, "Be aware of every thing that takes away your freedom. Know that it is dangerous and avoid it by all the means in your power."

Swami Vivekananda further said that strong moral character is a permanent guarantee against loss of true freedom. All weakness in our character like passions and desires are positive danger to freedom. Such weakness in character will endanger freedom and turn men into a miserable slave. So he said, "One may gain political freedom and social independence but if one is a slave to his passions and desires one can not feel the pure joy of real freedom."

Swami Vivekananda not only emphasised on the freedom of man; he also emphasised on the equality of all men irrespective of caste, creed and religion. He held the view that freedom of man is impossible without

(59) Ibid, Vol-I, P.173
(60) Ibid, Vol-V, P.419
equality of all men. As he said, "Above all, follow this
great doctrine of sameness in all things, through all being,
seing the same God in all. This is the way to freedom;
inequality, the way to bondage. No man, no nation can attempt
to gain physical freedom without physical equality....
Ignorance, inequality and desire are the three causes of
human misery."

Swami Vivekananda's concept of equality
is based upon the idea of basic sameness of the spirit and
abolition of all differences on the ground of caste, colour,
creed etc. that are sure enemies to human progress and
"stiffles our soul, regiments our thoughts and trims our
creative adventures in to narrow groups of slavish minds."

Swami Vivekananda's concept of equality
is very practical. It envisages a society of equals, where
there is freedom of thought and action. As he said, "We
preach neither social equality nor inequality but that every
being has the same right and insist upon freedom of thought
and action in every way."

Swami Vivekananda's interpretation of
freedom of thought and equality widened the political out-
look of the Indians. Every Indian thought in terms of free-
dom and sameness of all beings irrespective of their external
diversity, that led to the promotion of national unity and
emancipation. It gained popularity among the masses enormous-

(61) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-IV, P.328
(62) R.C. Gupta, Great Political Thinkers, P.85
ly and culminated in the outbreak of the revolution against the British rule. As A.D. Litman pointed out, "His social political and specially enlightening ideas objectively helped in the awakening of the wide masses of India, and prepared them for the subsequent growth of national liberation movement, which, as a result of the heroic efforts of the Indian people, culminated in the heroic victory in the creation of the independent Republic of India." (64)

GALVANISED THE NATIONAL SPIRIT

Swami Vivekananda wanted to demoralise the British people so that the freedom movement gains strength in India. In attempting to demoralise the British he showed how the British had been the Blood-suckers of the people of India and how they had exploited other nations to make itself prosperous. He said, "We see England the most prosperous Christian nation in the world with her foot on the neck of 250,000,000 Asiatics. We look back into history and see that the prosperity of Christian Europe began with Spain. Spain's prosperity began with the invasion of Mexico. Christianity wins its prosperity by cutting the throats of its fellowmen. At such a price the Hindu will not have prosperity." (65) To fortify his argument, Swami Vivekananda

(64) Swami Vivekananda - Studies in Soviet Union, Published on 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramkrishna, P.157
(65) Swami Vivekananda, Proletariat! Win Equal Rights, P.18
referred to the history of India and said that the British adopted the most barbaric policy towards the Indians for which history will never excuse. Comparing the Mohammedans with the British he said, "The Mohammedans came upon them, slaughtering and killing: slaughtering and killing...... India has been conquered again and again for years and last and worst of all came the English men. You look about India what has the Hindu left? Wonderful temples, everywhere. What has the Mohammedans left? Beautiful palaces. What has the English men left? Nothing but mounds of broken brandy bottles!"

The British allalong pursued the policy of profiteering in complete disregard of the interest of India. As it is said, 'Its whole aim was to flush out all Indian resources to enrich their own country.' Mohammedan invaders on the other hand were very considerate in this respect. They conquered India and plundered it. They also held a very tyrannical policy, destroying Hindu temples and shrines. But when they settled down in India they brought back all their booty to enrich the country they had ravaged and established a stable government in India. They thought India to be their motherland. But the British were worse than the Muslim invaders. By establishing a firm administration in India they only wanted to make it easier and seemingly more legal for them to take away India's wealth to England.

(66) Swami Vivekananda, Proletariat I Win Equal Rights, P.18
(67) S.C. Sengupta, Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism, P.66
Swami Vivekananda said that in the name of civilizing our country they exploited our country making us poorer day by day. There were perpetual famine and starvation in India. But the British had always been callous to it. Had they been sympathetic a little, millions of Indians would not have died like flies and insects. He criticised the British that they pretend love but in their heart there is terrible blood-thirst. As he said, "The love of man is on their lips, in their heart there is nothing but evil and every violence. 'I love you my brothers, I love you' and all the while they cut his throat. Their hands are red with blood....... but the judgement of God will fall upon them......."

Thus Swami Vivekananda wanted to demoralise the British and popularise the nationalist movement among the people. He wanted to boost an upheaval that was to sweep over the country and create a new India out of it. People who suffered from injustice and oppression for centuries would breathe in peace and live happily. As he said, "Let new India arise out of the peasant's cottage grasping the plough; out of the hearts of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from grocer's shope, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from the marts and from the markets. Let her emerge from the groves and forests from the hills and

mountains." He wanted to spread the fire of revolution to every nook and corner of the country and make it a concern of the masses. As he said, "Have fire and spread allover, work, work...... we shall succeed, may be slowly, but surely. Work as if on each of you depend the whole work. Fifty centuries are looking on you. The future of India depends on you. Work on."

Swami Vivekananda insisted that life is nothing but struggle. Struggle is the sine quanon of life. Inertia and indulgence are the sources of all misery that darkens our life. So if death occurs in course of such struggle, we should not step back as it will bring glory to us. As he said, "......Stand up and fight ! Not one step back....... Fight it out, whatever comes. Let the stars move from the sphere ! Let the whole world stand against us ! Death means only a change of garment. What of it ? Thus fight. You gain nothing by becoming cowards...... taking a step backward you do not avoid any misfortune."

Swami Vivekananda glorified struggle as religion of life. Man should not abstain from such struggle even if the whole world stands against him. As he appealed, "If the whole world stands against you sword in hand, would you still dare to do what you think is right ? If your wife and children are against you, if all your money goes , your

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(69) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-VII, P.327
(70) Ibid, Vol-IV, P.369-70
(71) Ibid, Vol-I, P.461
name dies, your wealth vanishes would you still stick to it? Would you still pursue it and go steadily towards your own goal?" He exhorted repeatedly that struggle to break off the fetters of miseries, to reach the goal of freedom is the very call of our Vedas, as the Vedas declares "Awake arise and stop not till the goal is achieved."

To Swami Vivekananda nothing is impossible in the world since soul-power is infinite. Man has tremendous power to move the world. Man is the source of all power and strength. To think any thing to be impossible is a sin. Man thinks impossibility because of his weakness. This weakness comes from fear that brings failure. As he said, "Never say, 'No', Never say I can not, for you are infinite. Even time and space are as nothing, compared with your nature. You can do any thing and everything, you are almighty." He further said, "Come up O' lion and shake off the delusions that you are a sheep. You are souls immortal, spirits free, best and eternal."

Citing the example of Nachiketa - an embodiment of sacrifice from the epics, Swami Vivekananda said that we must have sraddha in us for sacrifice. Like him we all should think, "I am superior to many, I am inferior to few, but no where I am the least, I can also do something." This lack of sraddha has brought about

(72) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-III, P.226
(73) Ibid, Vol-II, P.300
(74) Ibid, Vol-I, P.11
(75) Ibid, Vol-III, P.319
our downfall. We have become weak. Ever since India forgot the cult of her sacrifice, she has been subject to untold misery under the foreign rule. Therefore he appealed to the people, "......forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense pleasure, are not for thy individual, personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother’s altar....."

Swami Vivekananda’s writings and speeches were very heart-touching. It not only roused fire and fury in the mind of the people; it also enkindled love for the motherland. In course of a lecture at Lahore he said, "And slaves become the great masters! So give up being slaves. For the next fifty years this alone shall be our key-note — this our great Mother India. Let all other vain Gods disappear for the time from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race — every where his hands, every where his feet, every where his ears, he covers everything. All our gods are sleeping. What vain gods shall we go after and yet can not worship the God that we see all around us, the Virat? When we have worshipped this we shall be able to worship all other gods." What mother wants is strength and fearlessness from her children, who will be able to fight for her, if they realise that they are the ‘one spirit that animates the universe.’

(76) Nationalistic and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda, P. 118
(77) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-III, P. 300
Swami Vivekananda's words were like magic sparks that impressed the people forth with. He convinced the people that there is intellect in India and there is money, but there is no enthusiasm for strength and fearlessness. So he wanted to arouse the sense of strength and fearlessness among the people of India to resist the evils of British rule. He was convinced that fear and weakness were at the root of the sufferings of Indians. Unless they know how to resist the evils that deprived them of their happiness they can not enjoy any pleasures of life. Hence he said, "Arise, awake and stop not till the desired end is reached. Young men ...... arise, awake for the time is propitious. Already everything is opening out before us. Be bold and fear not......... We have to become .......fearless and our task will be done." He further said, "This is the great fact! Strength is life, weakness is death. Strength is felicity, life eternal, immortal, weakness is constant strain and misery, weakness is death."

Swami Vivekananda's speeches and writings inflamed the courage and confidence of the people. They agitated their mind against the British imperialism. Young men full of self-confidence, were determined to give up all their fears and doubts and face all eventualities against their opponents. As it is rightly observed, "To people, muzzled by military defeat and enervated by ceaseless

propaganda about the inborn superiority of the white races, Vivekananda's message of courage and hope, sustained by logic and scholarship was like milk and honey; and old nation seemed to be born anew."

Swami Vivekananda had no qualms - philosophical or practical - about the use of violence. He was opposed to the policy of non-violence, because once you adopt such a policy you give a long rope to the wicked to revel in harassing others. He knew that a man has to kill millions of microbes if he has to breathe and several worms if he has to walk and also millions of insects if he has to read the Gita by candle light. He once exhorted, "First of all our young man must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends, that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the Gita.... You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and mighty strength of Krishna better with a little strong blood in you. You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of Atma when your body stands firm upon your feet and you feel yourself as a man. Thus we have to apply these to our needs."

Swami Vivekananda was a great adorer of strength and tenacity rather than weakness. He paid high

(80) S.C. Sengupta, Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism, P.63
(81) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-III, P.242
tribute to Rani of Jhansi, who courted death instead of surrendering to her enemy. She fought for the cause of her own freedom and the freedom of her people. To Swami Vivekananda such sacrifice of life for a noble cause is worth-emulating. As he said, "Death is better than vagitating ignorant life; it is better to die on the battle field than to live a life of death."

Swami Vivekananda's exhortations were direct and forthright. He wanted to revive khatriya spirit among the people of India. He extolled Ravana as more and not less civilized than Rama because the demon king was more spirited than his righteous victor. In advocating the cult of violence he said, "It is constant struggle against nature that constitutes human progress, not conformity with it."

He further declared 'Good and evil are not separate existence. They are inextricably intertwined.' Such teachings were heartening to the Indian youths, who became determined to challenge the imperialistic laws and pave the way for national freedom. They drew inspiration from Swami Vivekananda's message: "We must die that is certain, let us die for a good cause....... The true man is he who is as strong as strength itself and possesses a woman's heart."

(82) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-II, P.124
(83) Quoted in S.C.Sengupta, Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism, P.72
(84) Ibid, P.72
(85) Ibid, P.72
Swami Vivekananda was a source of inspiration for the Indian minds. He tangibly changed the course of life of the people. The pre-independent Indian polity took a new turn, that became marked by exhibition of strength and fearlessness. As it has been observed, "A lion among men, he roared and thundered forth rousing the leviathan of the sleeping nation from century-old slumber and mental stupor, to rise on its feet and march on freely. He wanted in us the sleeping divinity to awaken that austere elevation of spirit, which rouses heroism...... It was due to his message of courage and fearlessness that he was described as tamer of soul."

As a matter of fact very few nationalist leader exercised as much influence on the youth of 20th century as did this Hindu monk - Swami Vivekananda. At a time when a nation was seized with apathy, inertia and despair, Swami Vivekananda preached the gospel of strength and fearlessness. Strength was the political testament of Swami Vivekananda to the Indian nation. With his speeches and writings, a new India seemed to be born. Of course as a mystic he stood for the practice of 'KarmaYoga', but this gospel underwent the process of political metamorphosis and the people of India accepted selfless social and political service for the motherland as an example of KarmaYoga.

(86) R.C. Gupta, Great Political Thinkers, P.79
(87) V.P. Varma, Modern Indian Political Thought, P.102
Swami Vivekananda's march from Colombo to Almora was a triumphal progress in 1897. The whole of India was thrilled to a mystical height by his speeches and writings. It prepared the ground for national emancipation through a religious ferment. It was about this time in 1899 a new Viceroy came to India, who felt the impact of the monk's personality and tried to counter his influence. This viceroy and governor general was Lord Curzon - a true successor to Wellesley and Dalhousie in ability and discretion. He came to India with an imperious will to give effect to his imperial visions. But within a few months of his arrival, he found something disheartening and disconcerting and thus wrote, ".....there is no doubt that a sort of quasi metaphysical ferment is going on in India; strongly conservative and even reactionary in general tendency......... What is to come out of this superstitions, transcendentalism, mental exaltation and intellectual obscurity - with European ideas thrown as an out side ingredient in to the crucible - who can say." It is evident from the above statement that Swami Vivekananda's influence was gaining ground enormously and the British authority was alarmed by it.

Subsequently, Ramkrishna Mission came to be regarded as the refuge of revolutionaries by the British Indian government. A research brochure in Bengali by Ladi Mohan Roy Chaudhury on the 'Ramkrishna Mission in the Eyes of the Police 1897 - 1917' (Calcutta, 1983) brings out

(88) Quoted in Amales Tripathy, The Extremist Challenge, P.125
how the Mission was very much in the bad books of the administration. The then police commissioner Mr. Charles Tegart, in his confidential report said, 'Not to speak of Vivekananda's followers, Vivekananda's own writings are pregnant with seditions.'

Rawlatt committee report (1918) also affirmed that Swami Vivekananda had an important influence on those who created a big pro-freedom tumult in the first decade of this century. This shows that Swami Vivekananda's contribution for national freedom was quite remarkable and the British attitude towards him was also suspicious. It was perhaps with a view to escaping from the eyes of the British that Swami Vivekananda laid down, "One belonging to the Order can have no connection with politics."

Swami Vivekananda sometimes apprehended that the British government would shot him. But as he was quite aware of his influence on his people, he believed that such action on the part of the imperial power will unleash a spate of violence in the country. As he said, "It would be the first nail to their coffin and my death would run through the land like fire."

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(89) S.C. Sengupta, Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism, P. 65
(90) Prof. Hiren Mukerjee, Vivekananda and Indian Freedom, P. 15
(92) Marie Louise Burke, Swami Vivekananda - A New Discovery, P. 427
IMPETUS TO EXTREMIST MOVEMENT

The Indian National Congress was eight years old, when in 1893 Swami Vivekananda went out on his historic mission. Eight years after, when the congress met in Calcutta in 1901 he was a dying but also a world famous man to whom the leading delegates went to pay their veneration at Belur Math. He was glad that the Congress had tried to take all Indians within its fold, but he did not like the westernised way of the leaders and their sole gift of 'Shouting' at public meetings and had no patience for their "politics of mendicancy, their begging the foreign government for crumbs of favour."

Among the Congress men there was one exception and that was Balgangadhar Tilak, whose patriotism was marked by 'sacrifice, scholastic fervour and militancy.' Tilak a great scholar, was also a fearless patriot, who wanted to meet the challenge of British imperialism with passive resistance and boycott of British goods. This programme came to the fore-front in 1905-7, some years after the death of Swami Vivekananda. It would be useless to speculate what Swamiji would have said about this programme, if he had been living during the Swadeshi agitation, but we know that Tilak had been much impressed by Swami Vivekananda's gospel of strength and fearlessness and his cult of violence, as he had given publicity to Swami Vivekananda's works abroad and wrote eloquently about him after

(93) S.C. Sengupta, Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism, P. 67
(94) Ibid, P. 68
his death in 1902. He wrote, "Vivekananda's contribution to the awakening of India raised him to the status of Sankaracharya.'

Tilak stood for three principles at this time - national education, Swadeshi and Boycott. It was on these principles that Tilak split the Congress at Surat and went into wilderness with his followers, known as extremists. The principal figures among the extremists were Aurobindo Ghose, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Roy.

Tilak left the scene of Indian politics in 1908 when he was sentenced to transportation for six years on a charge of sedition. Of his chief lieutenants, Aurobindo Ghose quietly left the British Indian territory in 1910 and settled at Pandicheri to devote himself to spiritualism. Bipin Chandra Pal went on an European tour and was very soon out of agitational politics. Lala Lajpat Roy also went out on a foreign mission and when he came back he shuttled between the extremists and moderates, so much so that he was seriously considered for the presidentship of the Congress in 1914, when the extremists had no place in it.

Tilak's biographer - Ram Gopal writes, 'Thus ended the extremist party, so sedulously built up by Tilak.' M.N.Roy also writes, "Tilak who was sentenced to six years hard labour in 1908 broke down the extremist party."

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(95) Mentioned in introduction to 'Proletariat! Win Equal Right by Swami Vivekananda

(96) Ram Gopal, Life of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, P.203

(97) Selected Works of M.N.Roy, Vol-I, P.338
This however is far from true. The extremist party was not built up by Tilak, who was at one time a foremost leader; neither did it end with Tilak's incarceration in 1908. It is a matter of history that the extremists were out of the Congress till 1916, but they had to be received back in 1917 when their representative Mrs Annie Besant was elected president in preference to Raja of Mahmudabad, the nominee of moderates. Anni Besant, the theosophist came nearer than Aurobindo to the secret of Swami Vivekananda's influence. In her presidential address at Calcutta Congress 1917, she analysed the forces that led to the national awakening and gave pride of place to Swami Vivekananda's influence. She often referred to Swami Vivekananda's speeches and writings.

B.C. Pal also endorsed the influence of Swami Vivekananda in his book - Spirit of Indian Nationalism. He wrote, "Under the influence of Neo-Vedantism, associated to a large extent with the name of Late Swami Vivekananda, there has been at work a slow and silent process of liberalisation of old social ideas." Extremism as Aurobindo preferred to call it, stands for that motto and methods of that school of politics, which aimed at complete independence of India, to be attained by non-violent means if possible and by violent means if necessary. Actually this movement for wresting freedom obviously by violence had started much earlier and Basudeo Phadke, who might have inspired

(98) B.C. Pal, The Spirit of Indian Nationalism, P. 40
Bankim Chandra, was its first Martyr. Great publicity was achieved by the Chapekar brothers who killed the two oppressive officials - Rand and Ayerst in 1897 at Pune. These gallant deeds were not the achievements of isolated individuals in Maharashtra and elsewhere. As far as it is known, the extremist party was formed in Bengal in the early years of 20th century and it owed its inspiration primarily to the writings and speeches of Swami Vivekananda.

As Rabindra Nath Tagore has observed, "Swamiji's speeches inspired the daring deeds of youths of Bengal and awakened in them the spirit of dedication and service to the nation."

Swami Vivekananda wanted Indians to awake from hypnotism of fear and cowardice and acquire strength, physical, mental and moral. It is only with strong biceps that man can have self-confidence, the root of all success. He also advocated violent technique to achieve the goal if circumstances so demanded.

Swami Vivekananda died in 1902 and within a few years after his death, concerted efforts were made to wrest freedom by violence. Hence it is very much natural to believe that the extremists derived their inspiration from his speeches and writings. Though he was not a participant in the revolutionary movement, it is seen that his influence continued to extend from Bengal to other parts of India even beyond the shores of India. Prof. Hiren Mukerjee has befittingly observed, "His (Vivekananda's) words

(99) Mentioned in introduction, Proletariat ! Win Equal Right, by Swami Vivekananda.
of fire had reached everywhere in India and the revolutionaries owed much to him as they moved into action that in the late nineties of the last century put fear in the alien rulers. Even more direct was his impact on Bengal revolutionaries....of Chittagong Armoury Raid(1930). They all have avowed their debt to the cyclonic monk."

All the patriots irrespective of their political affiliation, had to dodge the law; they had to procure arms by surreptitious means from abroad or make explosives in secret hide-outs at home. Even when Bagha Jatin(Jatin Mukerjee) met the British military police in an open encounter, he and his men had to fight with stolen military Pistols. Other rebels put on disguises, and assumed false names in order to elude official agents and collected money through secret donations or open robberies. Of the leading politicians of India, Tilak alone recognised their selfless patriotism, but he did so in an indirect way by resuscitating Sivaji- Afzalkhan affair or by referring to Krishna's teaching that no blame attaches to any person, who is not activated by any selfish motive or does not derive any personal profit from his actions. He went a little further when he said that Khudiram and Prafulla Chaki were inspired by a desire to mend the administration by a murderous assault when they found that the British would not do it themselves. He would not defend the use of bombs

(100) Prof. Hiren Mukerjee, Vivekananda and Indian Freedom, P.21
but said that the rulers by their persistence in their ruthless ways had invited such reprisals.

Now a question crops up where from did the young men who had jumped in to the struggle, get the inspiration that quickened their spirit and gave strength to their arms? Whatever their personal affiliations or leaning, as soldiers of freedom, they recognised only one God — Mother India and they believed in one cult — the cult of shakti worship. They saw not the mother that had suckled them but the mother that would send them to fight the common enemy. They would read and re-read the new message, "Buddha ruined us and so did Christ ruin Greece (101) and Rome," obviously with their lessons in Ahimsa (non-violence) i.e. "Have no enemy, bless them that curse you, whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also; stop all your work and be ready for next world ........" (102) They synthesised the Indian needs for the worship of Shakti, not in mere thoughts, not in imagination but in actual visible form ........

It was Swami Vivekananda, who introduced the cult of Shakti worship and violence, which was inherited by a galaxy of brilliant men, the first two being Aurobindo

(101) Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol-V, P.454
(102) Ibid, Vol-V, P.453
(103) Ibid, Vol-V, P.506
Ghose and Barindra Ghose, who might be called the joint authors of Bhabani Mandir. They were firm believers in the dictum of the Gita: "Always work with greater enthusiasm, destroy your enemies and enjoy the world." This sort of conviction guided the course of Indian nationalism all along. Though the advent of Gandhi in the scene of Indian politics in 1921 eclipsed the influence of Swami Vivekananda to some extent, his soul stirring message continued underneath to inspire millions of men and women of India to sacrifice their life at the altar of 'Mother India' till the end of Indian independence movement in 1947. Hence it is sometimes said that Swami Vivekananda sowed the seeds of revolution against the British, but Gandhi and Nehru reaped the harvest.

Thus the contribution of Swami Vivekananda to Indian Freedom Movement is very great. His name may be recorded in the history of Indian Freedom Movement in indelible terms. Hence it is said, "This preacher of religious harmony and toleration, who was Sankara in wisdom, Buddha in love and sympathy to all beings, Christ in humanity, Mohavir in faith and loyalty to his Lord, Narada in Bhakti, Arjuna in courage and KarmaYoga, Vysa in the knowledge of shastras, Suka in purity", still shines almost alone as a star of inspiration in the horizon of this nation. From East West his name is still honoured.

(105) The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Western and Eastern Disciple, Vol-IV, P.104