CHAPTER III

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON RELIGION

3.1 EMERGENCE OF VIVEKANANDA;

Swami Vivekananda (Narendra Nath Datta, 12th January, 1863) was born in a religious atmosphere of his house and surroundings where God was injected to his mind in the guise of God's commandments. Since his very childhood he observed various religious rites and ceremonies performed in his house and his neighbourhood. He also visited many temples, churches and mosques. The effect of all these imprinted in his mind in such a manner that he began to take God for granted. He had natural urge for classical music and poetry. He attentively studied Shelley and Wordsworth during his college life. As G.S. Banahati writes: "He studied Wordsworth and Shelley's 'Hymns to intellectual beauty' touched him the presence of supreme Reality ....... which had a curved corner in his mind due to the study of certain western philosophers." He also had a meditative strain that often made him appear aloof and indifferent. He used to live the austre of a spiritual aspirant and hence he daily practised meditation on God. He had also many more qualities of head and heart that betokens his future
glories. Mr. Hastie, the principal, Current Assembly Institute marked him as one of the genius among his students. It was Hastie who for the first time told him about the mystical experience in the course of his lecture on poetic trances of Wordsworth.

It has been already shown in some previous paragraphs that during the time of Swami Vivekananda religion was carrying on a last ditch fight, as if, with materialistic and rationalistic philosophy. Theism, materialism, scepticism etc., were competing with one another for a hold on human thought and life. By this time Westernised education had already been infiltrating Hindu minds. His search for the knowledge of the truth impelled him to study western science, history and philosophy. For sometime he was more or less influenced by Hume and Bentham's atheism, Spinoza's pantheism, Darwin's theory of evolution, Compte and Spence's positivism and agnosticism and other western, philosophical theories. To quote Banahati - "Philosophy was his natural liking and fervishly digested Herbert Spencer whose influence can be felt in his discharging arguments Vivekananda later developed". He also studied the philosophy of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhaur as well. Being well-conversant with modern stalwarts of science and philosophy, he possessed a stern scientific attitude and uncompromising respect for human intellect.
Like some remarkable youth of his day; Swami Vivekananda came under the influence of Bramho-Samaj led by Keshab Chandra Sen and Debendra Nath Tagore. Vivekananda regularly attended the meetings of Bramho-Samaj and took active participation in devotional chorus as he had also a sweet voice. And through the meetings of Bramho-Samaj he was drawn towards Indian religion and philosophical heritage and within a short time he familiarised himself with the basic ideas of Indian thought. He used to study intensively the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, Sankara's Advaita Vedanta and all philosophical systems of India. Inspite of all these Vivekananda's quest for God was not satisfied. The principles adopted by Bramho-Samaj though attracted him for certain reasons failed to cast a spell on him. To quote Satprakashamanda - "The Bramho-Samaj was a socio-religious movement considerably influenced by western thought and culture. It was primarily based on reason and ethics and not on the supersensuous experiences. It served as a check against English educated youths becoming converts under the influence of the christian missionaries. But it could not satisfy Narendra Nath's yearning for direct knowledge of God. The Samaj was opposed to Hindu idol worship, caste-distinction and child marriage, and unlike Hinduism supported widow-marriage. Young Narendra Nath was in favour of these ideas of reform but its conventionality lacking
in true devotion to God had little charm on him. He was slowly moving through his enormous stock of knowledge towards the question which marked the real beginning of his intellectual quest for God. In 1881, he asked D.N. Tagore his famous question - 'Have you seen God?' and got no reply.

Then came his turning point of his life in his meeting with Ramakrishna Paramhansa in November 1881. When Vivekananda asked Ramakrishna if he had seen God and got the historic answer. Ramakrishna replied - "Yes I have seen Him even as I see you only more clearly, more intimately." He also told him that he felt the reality of God in his own life, in the pulse of his being and was face to face with Him almost all his life and this made a profound change in Vivekananda. To quote Dr. S. Radhakrishnan - "The impact of his personality, his passionate love for God made a remarkable change in his life and works of Vivekananda. Ramakrishna's answer acted as soothing balm to his agitated nerves."  

For a long time, however, Vivekananda was a staunch intellectual. He did not accept any assertion of his master without putting into cross-examination. As a Brâhmo he had no belief in image-worship Vivekananda and even criticised Ramakrishna's Kali-worship. Vivekananda asked him if he had to worship Her because he was there with him. Ramakrishna replied
"All right before long you will not only accept Her but weep in Her name". Vivekananda could not understand many of his sayings of his master and rebelled. At last it is the burning renunciation of his teacher which removed his obstinate rationality. Vivekananda throughout his life looked upon his master Ramkrishna as a realised soul. To put in his own words - "Sri Ramkrishna incarnated in India to demonstrate what the true religion of the Aryan is". He also said - "He showed by his life what the risis and avatars really wanted to teach. The books are theories, he was realisation".

After the sad demise of Ramkrishna in 1886 he had to keep his disciples together. They performed 'Vraja-Homa' in 1887 and became ascetic and took sanyasin's name. In 1888 he embarked upon extensive travels. He visited all the important centres of Indian culture and wandered the vast land from Himalayas to Capecamorine. During his second trip he met Pavahari Baba at Gajipur and was tempted to take yoga-practice, but the vision of Ramkrishna made him to go back to his monastery. In Ahmedabad he was attracted to Jain and Islamic tradition. Historical monuments stirred him deeply. In the midst of ruined steps of Nalanda and Saranath he brooded over the meaning of Buddha's life. As a born lover of humanity Vivekananda was
naturally drawn to the compassionate Buddha. "Buddha" he said, "was not a man but a realisation. Enter all ye, into it; have receive the key". He set out again to the Himalayas in 1898 with determination not to return. He wished to become 'Paribrajaka', a solitary roaming monk and wandered to and fro for two years. In Kanya-kumari Vivekananda set on a rock and started meditating. On his meditation Dr. Lakshmi Kumari writes - "Marvellous was that meditation. India's glorious past, degeneration of the present and glorious future passed through Swamiji's mind. During this meditation and thereafter he received the answers of his queries. His search was over. Mother's work presented itself before him as well loud out plan, the central theme which is "Expansion of cours in spiritual terms".

Then came out the turning point of his career. He attended the first session of Parliament of Religions at Chicago on September 11, 1893 and there he gave an exposition of Vedanta Philosophy. That eventful day, 11th September 1893 is now one of pages lettered in gold in the history of religions of the world. Almost all religions were represented there and the respective leaders had arrived there and they tried heart and soul to establish supremacy of their own faiths and beliefs.
"It was into such a crowd that Swami Vivekananda found the way and contrary to what other leaders did, from the very first note—"Sisters and Brothers of America" his was a tune which created resonance of the true and fundamental harmony and made people think and feel as one." To quote a few lines from 'Indian Mirror' 1893—"Truely it may be said of Swami Vivekananda's work in America, that he went, spoke and conquered. The influence that this gifted Hindu youth is exercising, is something wonderful. His teaching has so tolerant, unsectarian, lucid and logical and free from resentful invective and so truely representative of higher ideas of Hinduism that his audiences have bowed down before him in astonished gratitude". An 'American review' 14/1897 observes—"Toleration to all was a high ideal, love all the faiths, seeming right and goodness in all religions was the highest ideal". By his eloquence, depth of knowledge, expansiveness of his vision, intensity of his realisation he was capable of proving himself to be the top of all religious thinkers—'Man of the Congress'. Within a short period of his staying there he carved for himself a nitche in the audience at the world of Parliament and also the heart of the well-meaning people of America and later in England and Europe. The Swami Vivekananda came to Newyork and sailed for England in September 1895. In the same year he delivered a series of lectures on
Karman-yoga, Bhakti-yoga in Harvard University. In the month of February 1896, he organised the Vedanta Society of Newyork. Then Vivekananda went to London where he met some world famous Philosophers like Prof. Max Muller and Paul Oakson.

After the successful tour of America and England he came back to India. On his return to India he received a heroic welcome. But he had little time to rest on the laurels. He undertook whirling tour carrying with him the message of spirituality of India to remote parts of India. In October 1899 he returned to Belur, the headquarter of Ramkrishna Mission. He also founded the Advaita Ashram in Almora in the month of March 1899. In the same year he had his second tour to America with his devoted disciple Sister Nivedita to observe the work of Vedanta society there. In 1900, he went to Paris to attend the Congress of History of Religions. He returned to Belur on 9th December 1900. In 1901 he had his last pilgrimage on the request of his old mother Shubaneswari Devi.

3.2 'VIVEKANANDA'S IDEA OF RELIGION' ;

Religion is the central theme of Swami Vivekanand's philosophy. He conceived religion as the dominating and guiding force of life. By religion he did not mean the Orthodox
conventional religion. He found out the weakness of it and criticised it as an silk worm. To stick to conventional orthodox religion is like an act that "we make the thread of our own substance and spin the cocoon and in the course of time one imprisoned inside". But he, however, did not oppose to rites and ceremonies, myths, traditions and institutions, on the other hand, he regarded all these to be essential elements of every religion. With the same spirit of his master Sri Ramakrishna he conceived that these are the husks of religion but as the seed cannot germinate and grow without the husk likewise for any religion for its existence requires the help of rites, rituals etc. but by themselves they are not religions. They are only the instruments to practise religion. With the help of rites, rituals etc; religious truths are preserved and religion is taught to the people. They are the concrete forms of abstract religion. They should be understood as the means and not the ends of religion. But they lose the touch with religion assumes independent existence of their own. They stand in the way of true religion. Swamiji writes - "Rituals are Kindergarten of religion. They are absolutely necessary for the world as it is now, only we shall have to give people newer and fresher rituals. A party of thinkers must do this. My watchword is construction, not destruction, out of the existing rituals new one's will have to be evolved". He wanted to make religion
most dynamic. An age attains dynamic process when people learns to live for truth, for beauty and love for fulfilling our aspirations to rise above the sordid self. He tried to provide us with opportunity to mobilise our own spiritual aspirations.

According to Swami Vivekananda religion is co-extensive with life and it influences the social and economic ideals of the people and their daily conduct and activity. He writes - "They may be very good if it is absolutely impracticable no theory is of any value whatever except an intellectual gymnastic - we must be able to carry out in every part of our lives. The ideals of religion must cover the whole life, they must enter into all our thoughts and more and more into practice".16

Religion does not consist in any doctrine or dogmas or intellectual discourse. It is the Being and Becoming. He declared - ‘Religion is realisation’. One must try to realise God not only in his traditional way, he or she must be ready to join other religious groups in their own traditional methods.

In explaining the origin of the ideas of religion he reconciled the 'spiritual' and 'Evolution theory' and brought about a new theory which relates to struggle to transcend the limitation of the senses. According to Swami Vivekananda human
mind has the power to rise to higher conception and when a man reaches such a state, he experiences a new series of facts in the spiritual kingdom. Human mind can cross over the barrier of senses and the power of thinking and realises the facts which are the basis of the religions of the world. The facts are discrete and isolated which the highly organised religion take pure form of abstract unity, an Omniscient Being, called God, a Moral Law which is the Absolute Essence that underlies in every existence. Man has the latent tendency to reach this ideal power and Infinite pleasure. Our senses and bodies which fail to express the Infinite for they are too limited and Infinite can also never manifest through the finites.

Out of the principle of evolution which states that every effect is the reproduction of a preceding cause changed only by circumstances, Swami Vivekananda arrived at the third universal generalisation from which everything else has come. This primal cause Brahman must be identical with the most significant effects. This Brahman is Absolute Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. Existence is the last generalisation the human mind can attain at. Knowledge is the essence of the ultimate fact, the essential unity of everything else. The matter out of which our bodies are made of may have been present
in the Sun many years ago. Hence, all bodies are one and
the same, the thought is one ocean in which minds are
whirlpools. Swami Vivekananda is of opinion that matter, mind
and the spirit are essentially one. Hence the saying — 'Thou
art That' the self

Swami Vivekananda gave a new meaning to religion. His
approach to religion was out and out a novel one. Commenting
on Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of religion A.R. Wadia
remarks — "Shri Ramakrishna was a thought, Swami Vivekananda
was the expression of thought". Swami Sarvagatananda has
expressed the above idea thus — "It was Vivekananda who made
butter out of milk, that is, he observed and closely followed
the life of Ramkrishna and then gave a cohesive form to his
divine experiences". Swami Vivekananda understood well Ramkrishna's
words when the later said - the Mugal's coins have no currency
under East India's rule and Swamiji believed that religion would
have to be scientific to fit into the wave of the future. Religion
does not consist in mere belief. Hence, he expounded the scientific
approach to religion. He also understood that man wants to
understand the meaning of their lives and the universe. To Swami
Vivekananda — "Religion is the science of the spirit, the soul,
the science of life and science of Being". Religion is more
scientific than science itself because religion is mandate from
within. Religion is universal, impersonal and eternal. He wanted that - "Not only be it made scientific - a science at least, as any of the conclusions of Physics and Chemistry - will have greater strength because physics and chemistry have no internal mandate to voucher for it's truth which religion has. Religion is the motivation towards individual perfection and social progress. Religion must be good for all". According to him the test of religion depends on the truth of the constitution of man and not on some books alone for it is He and nothing else, the eternal subject in the heart who says - "I am in every heart the Deathless one". In all religions of the world the prophets experienced this. Swamiji said - "As mathematics in every part of the world does not differ, so the mystics do not differ. They are all similar, similarly contained and similarly situated. Their experience are the same and becomes the law". And because of this Swamiji said - "I bow down to the prophets of the past and the prophets yet to come". Our ordinary experience is only the source of knowledge but it does not fully apply to religion. Only a small group of mystics teach religion. It is to be not Swami Vivekanda did not equate religion with mysticism. He warned us to be aware of mysticism thus - "Occultism and mysticism have nearly destroyed us, they may have great truths in them. We have wept for long enough. We want now a man making religion. Anything
that makes man weak reject as poison. Truth is strengthening.
Give up these weakening mysticism.23.

According to Swami Vivekananda while chemistry and other material sciences deal with the truth of the physical world, religion deals with the metaphysical world. He says — "The book one must read to learn chemistry is the book of nature. The book which to learn religion is one's own mind and heart. The sage is often ignorant of physical science and the scientist too ignorant of religion, because he too reads the wrong book without".26 He wanted to preach religion which must be compatible with the modern science. According to him any scientific theory adopts three principles — (1) particular is explained by the, the general by the more general until it comes to the universal (ii) The explanation of things are to be found in terms of their own nature and outside agent is required to explain what is going on in the universe — the principle of self-consistency, (iii) The principle of evolution is nothing but the manifestation of the principle of self-consistency. Hence Swamiji says — "The whole meaning of evolution is simply that nature of a thing is reproduced that effect is nothing but the cause of another form ..... change only by circumstances ..... we need not go to see the course of these changes, they are within".25
According to Swami Vivekananda - religion needs constant help from reason, when religion refuses to take help of reason that religion weakens itself. Religion must justify itself by reason and must apply the same method which we apply to other natural sciences. He once said - "If a religion is destroyed by such investigations it was then all the time useless, unworthy and superstition and sooner it goes better". He believed religion which is not based on reason, it's destruction would be best thing that could happen. He was, however, critical in regard to the limitations of reason. The knowledge provided by reason is often too theoretical to satisfy us in actual practice. Reason lacks vividness and reality. Knowledge that we acquire through personal realisation gives an altogether different order than offered by reason. Vivekananda's scientific interests were secondary and primarily he was a man of religion. He was concerned with spiritual truths, not with physical discoveries.

Adding new meaning to religion Swamiji was not satisfied with humanising it. He tried to socialise it's purpose. He said - "Man is the greatest of all things". The best way to realise God consists in serving his fellow-men. In his own words - "I do not believe in God or religion which cannot wipe out widow's tears or a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth...."
I do not call it a religion so long it is confined to books or dogmas. Religion must be in conformity with contemporary thoughts. He put emphasis on the service of man. He said - "There is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality."

According to Swami Vivekananda religion is strength and strength is religion. Strength is life, weakness is death. Religion is the manifestation of natural strength of man. Religion ought to teach fearlessness or 'Abhaya'. He equated strength with religion. This view of Swami Vivekananda is opposed to the traditional view of religion maintained by the theologicians who maintained the view that man is insignificant before God. He maintained that real nature of human beings is not weak and fallible. It is ever-abiding self. Thinking oneself to be weak makes oneself weak. Strength brings out from within all the courage we need. Man by identifying with the self, the Atman, can bring out hope, courage and strength. Whatever we need. In this connection Swamiji speaks about faith or Sradha. Though ordinarily the word Sradha is translated into faith but it is not so. According to him it is effective attitude in a particular situation. He equally stressed on the cultivation of physical and mental strength. He wanted to see strength
manifested in every situation. He said - "You will be nearer to God through football than through the study of the Gita.... you will understood Upanishads and glory of the Atman better when your body stands firm upon your feet and you will feel yourself to be man". 30

As mind controls the body so he gave strength of mind also. Mental strength comes through concentration. A man must develop his will-power and the power of concentration in order to achieve his goal. As regards intellectual strength he said - "If you are born a man, have a mark behind ......." 31 He believed that from the idea of largeness a person becomes gradually aware of his spiritual nature. Apart from all these he equally gave importance on economic, political and military strength. He said - "As long as even a dog remains hungry, I consider it my religion. By military strength Swamiji said - "I have never spoken of revenge, I have always spoken of strength". 32 According to him spiritual strength is the controller of mind and body. If we are aware of spiritual strength we will be able to bring out that strength in the other levels of life. Swami-Vivekananda's prescription was to hear the strength giving ideas about our divine nature, to meditate upon them and to assert them in every situation of life.
According to Swami Vivekananda religion is to be attained by Yoga or Union. He prescribed four Yogas - Jñana, Karma Shakti and Dhyana in such a way that everyone belonging to any religions practices gains enlightenment. The goal of man is to attain perfection. If these yogas are followed in uraision work like four wheel drive and lead us to the ultimate Realisation. He said - "This is the whole of religion. Doctrine or dogma, rituals or books, temples or forms are but secondary details ...... each soul is potentially divine".

Swami Vivekananda hold the view that religion must be free from superstition. He regarded it to be the great envy of man. He said - "Superstition is a great enemy of man, bigotry is worse". He always advised us to be aware of superstition. "I would rather see everyone of you rank atheist ...... for the atheist is alive and you can make something of him. But if superstition enters the brain is gone, the brain is softening, degradation seized upon this life mystery mongering and superstitions are always signs of weakness".

Swami Vivekananda, however, did not condemn idolatory or image worship. To him image is an aid to worship. He said - "Nowhere I found a single Hindu worshipping an image saying - 'O stone, I worship thee, O metal be merciful to me'. Everyone is worshipping spirit, the soul of the pure knowledge".
image worship first the divinity in the heart of the worshipper
is invoked and then identified with the image before him. Swami
Vivekananda said - "External worship, image worship, says the
scriptures, is the lowest stage struggling to rise high, mental
prayer is the next stage, but the highest stage is when the
Lord has been realised". He also said that - "The Hindus have
discovered the Absolute can only be realised or thought of or
stated through the relative and the images. Crosses and Crescents
are simply so many symbols - so many pegs to hang spiritual
ideas on. It is not that this help is necessary for everyone
but those that do not need it have no right to say that it is
wrong". To him image worship is an attempt of undeveloped
minds to grasp the spiritual truths.

3.3 CONCEPT OF BRAHMAN:

If we go through the philosophy of Vivekananda it
becomes evident that his mainbody of thought was derived from
Hindu scriptures - Primarily the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita
and Vedanta. His idealism is monistic for he very often describes
reality in the style of Abstract monism. Sankara's Vedanta is
popularly known as Advaita or Non-dualism or unqualified monism
or Abstract monism as he called the Absolute, the Brahman, the
ultimate Reality devoid of all qualifies. Vivekananda's Vedanta
is also Vedantic for he also holds the Brahman, the ultimate
Reality is one without a second. (Ekam ev advitiyam) But as
distinguished from traditional Vedanta his Vedanta is Neo-
vedanta or Synthetic Vedanta in so far as he reconciles
Dvaitaism and Advaitic and other theories of reality. It can
be branded as Concrete Monism for he regarded Brahman both
as qualified and qualityless (Saguna and Nirguna).

According to Vivekananda Brahman is Infinite Existence
(Sat), Infinite Knowledge (Cit), and Infinite Bliss (Ananda).
Brahman is without a name form or stain. He is beyond space,
time and causation. He is all in all, nothing exists save
Him. He says - "There is neither nature nor God nor the universe,
only that Infinite Existence out of which through name and form
are manufactured. All this universe is the reflection of that
Eternal Being on the secret of Maya - the triad of space, time
and causation. These are only ideas and concepts of our mind
and have no place in Brahman. The world is the creation of
name and form, a Maya ....... we are looking upon one Existence
in different forms and creating all these images of objects
upon it........ the world is but a dream and this dream also
vanishes when we wake up and becomes free from Maya. There
is but one, in Him is Maya, the dreaming of this dream".38
According to Vivekananda there are two ideas of God - Personal and Impersonal. Personal God is the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the world of everything, but he is not separate from Atman. Impersonal God is without any of these attributes. Sankara conceived Personal God or Isvara as determinate (Saguna), God is the product of ignorance and Maya. He is not real from the transcendental point of view. But according to Vivekananda Absolute and God are not two. God is not the creation of Maya, God is all pervasive, Omnipresent He says - "The Absolute is that ocean, while you and I, the Sun, and stars and everything else are various waves of that ocean and what makes the waves different only the form and that form is time, space and causation, all entirely dependent on the wave".  

According to Vivekananda the Absolute has become and becoming. The Absolute has become the universe "by becoming through space, time and causation ....... time, space and causation are like the glass through which Absolute is seen and when seen on the lower side, it appears as the universe". In the Absolute there is neither time, space or causation for the Absolute is beyond them all. They have no real existence yet they are not non-existent because it is through them all things are manifesting as the universe. They sometimes disappear.
As Vivekananda explains - "The wave is the same as the ocean yet we know it as a wave and as such different from the ocean. What makes it different from the ocean are it's name and form. If the wave subsides the form vanishes in a moment and yet the form was not a delusion. So long as the wave existed and the form was there and yet you are bound to see the form, this is Maya. Absolute is manifesting as many when we see through time, space and causation. Hence, it seems that Vivekananda had two different conception of Brahman or Absolute as apparently manifested in the universe and is really expressed in it.

Though in conformity with Sankara Vivekananda admits that Brahman is the only Reality and the world is unreal in the generic sense, yet he introduced a policy of give and take. He agrees with Sankara in rejecting the reality of the world but unlike Sankara he deifies the world. Sankara rejected the world as unreal but Vivekananda gives the world a status of Brahman itself. He supplements and transforms the famous assertion of Sankara 'All this is nothing' into 'All this is nothing but Brahman'. In other words he transforms and extends the concept of Brahman.

Swami Vivekananda held the opinion that there can not be answer to the question - in what way does Absolute cease to
be Absolute degenerating into the phenomenal world. He says -
"The Absolute is Absolute, in expressing some ideas of the
Absolute we thereby restrict it so that it ceases to be Absolute.
Absolute or Brahman can not be expressed by reason." Whatever
is expressed by reason is limited. In this sense "A God known
as no more God. He has become finite like us." But Infinite
as such can never become finite.

Commenting on the concept of Absolute or Brahman Brodov
observes - "Vivekananda does not depart from the traditional
Vedanta. It is impossible to know Brahman by reason, it is
only possible to merge with it in one's soul, freeing itself
from the fralters of the material world. It's degenerating action
as the Absolute are in expresible in the categories of reason.

3.4 CONCEPT OF MAYA AND ISVARA :

The theory of Maya forms one of the pillars upon which
Vedanta rests. As this theory of Maya has been interpreted in
various ways from time to time. Hence, it requires proper
understanding of the problem. In the vedic literature it is
understood in the sense of delusion. In the Upanishads the
Maya reappeared with a new meaning. In Shvetashvataru upanished,
it is stated thus - "Know Nature to be Maya, the ruler of this
Māyā is the Lord Himself. The theory of Māyā has been discussed by the Buddhists too and took the form of Idealism. In these ways the theory of Māyā has been discussed in various ways until Sankaracharyya established his Advaita Vedanta attaching much priority to it. When the Hindu say that the world is Māyā it is generally understood that the world is an illusion. The theory of Māyā understood in this sense has been criticised from several ends. But Māyā should not be understood incorrectly to denote illusion or delusion. Reacting on this sense Vivekananda said - "This transition of the word is neither happy nor correct. The concept that this world is an illusion comes through the Buddhist philosophers who did not believe in the existence of world at all. But the Māyā of Vedanta in its developed form is neither Idealism or Realism, nor it is a theory. It is a simple statement of fact ....... what we are and what we see around us". He also said that - "we see the world through our five senses and if we had to another sense we should see something else. If we have still another sense, it would appear as something else. If we have still another sense, it would appear as something different again. So as we go ....... the universe as we see it therefore is a mixture of existence and non-existence". From
the Vedantic stand-point finite is not a mere dream but a real form of the Absolute. Vivekananda accepts all realities as true though differing in degree of manifestation. In answering the question - if Vedanta accepts everything as real why the world has been described as Māyā, Vivekananda says that - Māyā does not mean illusion if the word illusion is taken in the sense of opposite of reality. Māyā indicates only the relative reality of the world and of the human life. He says - "The world is an indefinable mixture of reality and appearances, of certainty and illusion." The Māyā does not mean that the world is pure illusion, it is full of contradictions and in this sense it can be described as unreal or illusory. Vivekananda says - "The world has neither existence nor non-existence. You can not call it existent because that alone really exists which is beyond space and time, which is self existent, yet this world does not satisfy to a certain degree idea of existence. Therefore we can say that it has an apparent existence." The Absolute is free from contradiction.

Sometimes the word 'Māyā' is described as ignorance, untruth, attachment to material comforts etc. It was maintained that the world is Māyā and hence it must be rejected through
and through and all actions are to be given up. Vivekananda regards this kind of asceticism as gospel of despair. To him the world has both aspects of illusory and reality, nature and freedom, passion and reason. He says - "We have to fight our way through Maya which is beyond Maya". He advocated activism rather than passivism. He compares that type of ascetic idea that "I shall cross all the water has run into the ocean".

As to the question how the Infinite or Absolute becomes the finite he had recourse to two theories. (1) Bramhavilasa Vada advocated by Samkhya who differentiated the world of finites as the actual or real transformation of Brahman. (2) Advaita Vedantic Vivarta-Vada that holds the view that there is no real transformation of Brahman into differentiated objects. There is no change of the unchangeable or change of Brahman as such but the appearances of the Brahman to relative consciousness. Brahman does not transforms into the world but appears as the world or illusory superimposition of forms and names upon the Absolute. World exists only in relation to the mind. The Absolute has become the universe by coming through time, space and causation. The differentiated world is the manifestation of the Absolute to consciousness bound by space
time and causality. To express in his own words—"The Absolute has become the universe by coming through space, time and causation... Time, space and causation are like the glass through which Absolute is seen and when it is seen in the lower side, it appears as the universe..... in the Absolute there is neither time, space and causation. The idea of time can not be there seeing that there is no mind, no thought, the idea of space cannot be there seeing that there is no external thing, what you call motion and causation can not exist where there is only One...... we can only think of something in motion in comparison with something to which is moving."

Swami Vivekananda gave a new interpretation of Maya by which not only he tried to prove the world but also deify it. The deification of the world is something novel in Vivekananda's philosophy.

Buddhism and Vaishnavite theism also tried to give importance on the effective side of human life. With a view to softening the stern logic and abstract metaphysical speculation of the Upanishads and Advaita Vedanta Vivekananda informulating his New Vedanta could not help insisting on effective side of human life. He realised the fact that in establishing spiritual bond of unity of human race can be made
only through love. He says - "The cosmos is a manifestation of love. From the lowest atom to the highest ideal love is the motive power of the universe. Under the impact of love Christ stands ready to give up his own life for humanity, Buddha for an animal, without it universe would fall to pieces in a moment. This love is God."

A simple question naturally arises here - if love is adequate for the unification of mankind then why he brought about the concept of God in his philosophical speculation. Vivekananda never denied that religious feeling is not possible without faith in God but he believed that God has great evocative power. He says - "I have been asked many times - Why do you use that old word God?" In replying to this question he opined that God is the best word for it serves our practical purposes. He said - "All the hopes, aspirations and happiness of humanity have been centred in that word. It is impossible now to change it. All that is great and holy is associated with it."

According to him the idea of God rouses the emotion of love and worn personal attachment. God has undying power. He believed that the heart has its own counsel which may be superior to that often by head. Hence, he said - "If your heart comes into
Swami Vivekananda opines that the world of causation is relative to our senses. Maya is not the cause of the universe with its multiplicity of objects, it is also responsible for our maintenance of the existence of a personal God or Isvara. When we try to give reality to this world then it necessarily leads us to the idea that there must be a creator or a responsible ruler, i.e. God or Isvara. If the world is taken to be an effect then the effect must be owing to a certain cause. Hence, God is the creator of the world. This God is transcendent and immanent in the world. To Vivekananda this God is both efficient and material cause of the universe both the creator and the created. There is only one Existence, One Infinite in which we dream all dreams. Atman is the only Reality. This Atman or self is the eternal God. Isvara is not bereft qualities and possessing these qualities God has individuality. He is not Impersonal like the Absolute or Brahman. Vivekananda describes God thus - He from whom this universe proceeds, in whom it rests and to whom it returns. It is the Isvara the eternal, the pure, the all Knowing, the Almighty, the Everfree, the Teacher of all teachers, the Lord who in his own nature is inexpressible love.
According to Vivekananda there is only one God, the Absolute or Brahman, the only one without a second. From the superficial point of view we conceive two Gods - (1) Impersonal and (ii) Personal. The Impersonal is also known as 'Saccidananda' which is indefinable by any positive quality. Often attempts are made to define it only negatively - 'Not this, not this' i.e. 'Neti-Neti' personal God can be conceived only from the empirical point of view. This personal God is no one else but the Absolute or Absolute or Brahman which is seen through Mayā. The same Brahman which is also Isvara, the Impersonal and personal in one. According to Vivekananda Isvara is the highest manifestation of Absolute or to speak in other words the highest possible reading of the Absolute by the human mind. The Isvara has only relative existence. As regards to the relation between the Absolute and Isvara - we can talk of relation when there are two things. But the Absolute and the personal God are not the two but one and the same. He says - "The Impersonal is conceived by the mind as the creator, the ruler and dissolver of the universe, it is the material and efficient cause, the Supreme ruler - the living or loving, the beautiful in the highest sense." He has demonstrated the sameness of the Absolute with the help of the following example. "If a man starts from here and see the sun he will see at first a little sun, but as he
proceeds, he will see it bigger and bigger and until he reaches the real one. At each stage of his progress he was seeing apparently a different sun yet we are sure it was the same sun he was seeing. When seen through the glass of Maya i.e. time, space and causation appears as the world and its creator and ruler called Isvara or God. Vivekananda is of opinion that Brahman is the only reality and what is conceived as personal God or Isvara is the personified Impersonal Absolute. He holds that - "The whole universe is in the self called Brahman. The self when it appears behind this that little universe the body, is the soul ....... the Universal self which is beyond the universal modification of prakrti is what is called Isvara, the Supreme God."  

According to Vivekananda man has the capacity to see God in the light of his own capacity. Man attains the best attributes to God to the best of his knowledge, each attribute is the whole of God and this signification of the whole by one quality is the metaphysical explanation of the personal God. The concept of personal God is true as much as the world is true, but only relatively. The conception is true and not true at the same time. The statement of Vedanta 'You are, I am God' does not refer to personal God which refers to the Absolute. The
conceit of personal God is the play of Maya. For example, - in our ordinary life we succumb to snake- rope illusion.
We mistake rope for a snake when snake is not existing then and there in the outer world but exists only in the mind.

3.5 CONCEPT OF UNIVERSE:

According to Swami Vivekananda the world is the exact miniature of the universe and whatever is found in the universe is also present in each and individual being. The rules and regulations operating in the universe are also operating in human constitution. Man can reach his highest goal of life provided he follows the correct means to reach it. Man is potentially divine and when he earns this distinction to realise his divinity completely he becomes one with the Absolute or Brahman. The whole Indian philosophical systems leaving a few is based on this conception. That is why Vivekananda opines that the true nature of Brahman or the universe is to be brought in the nature of man. He also says that as man is divine in nature so also the society for the society is composed of man.

According to Vivekananda in the scheme of the universe we find perfect harmony, order and regularity. The universe maintains perfect order in it. Both man and nature also fulfill
a definite purpose, contradictions and confusions that are seen in both man and nature are only apparent and not real.

Swami Vivekananda in explaining the theory of the universe maintains that: "It is He Himself who has become this universe. He is not only the instrumental cause but also the material cause. The cause is never different from effect, the effect is but the cause reproduced in another form. Nature before its creation was in a perfect balance without any kind of distinction of form and name. This state is called 'Avyakta'. But this state of equilibrium is disturbed when the three forces begin to mix in various ways and the universe comes into being. He also maintains that these three forces are in operation in the case of man also. He says: "These three forces also exist in man when the Sattva materials prevail knowledge comes, when Rajas activity and when Tamas darkness, lassitude, idleness and ignorance". 59

Accepting the Sākhya theory of evolution Vivekananda maintains that the highest manifestation of the Absolute is the Mahat, the great which is the germ of the manifold world of objects including intellect, ego and mind. It is cosmic in its nature but also having the psychological aspect called Buddh or Intellect. To him human intellect is a part of the universal Intelligence or Mahat. Hence, the Mahat is distinguishable from
man or mind and the function of the intellect. The function of mind as Vivekananda says, is "simply to collect impressions and present them to the Buddhi. The individual Mahat which determines upon it. Out of Mahat comes egoism and out of which comes again the five materials. The five materials combine and become the gross materials outside in the external universe". 60

Intelligence is the reflection of the self upon nature. Vivekananda also holds that nature is inclusive of mind and thought. Beginning with thought to the grossest form of matter everything that we come across is the manifestation of nature. Nature is such that it covers the self if man and nature unveils it's cover the self shines own light. Now attachment is the means by which the cover of nature can be taken away. Egoism, will and mind, all have a common basis, the citta or mind, state out of which they all evolve. The mind stuff taken in the form of nature and project them as thought. Vivekananda also points out that - "There must be something again when both force and matter are one, this is called 'Avyakta', the unmanifested state of nature before it's creation and which after the end of a cycle, the whole of nature returns to come out again after another period. Beyond that is purusa, the essence of Intelligence". 61
3.6 CONCEPT OF MAN

Ever since the development of human thought the concept of 'man' has occupied the most important subject for discussion in philosophical domain. Various sciences also have developed to interpret 'man' in different ways. The complexity of human life and the growing understanding of the ways in which human action and thought find expression have drawn interest in philosophical speculation. It is ever recurring fact that man is never satisfied with what he attains in the mundane world; but he wants something more and more, he wants to exceed himself. This ever exceeding nature of man draws him to infinitude. He is finite-infinite being. He is finite in regard to his physical existence no-doubt, but potentially he is infinite. This infinite potentiality in man finds beautiful expression in the philosophy of Vivekananda.

In accordance with the tradition of Vedanta he regards man as something unique, son of Immorality (Amṛitasya pūtraḥ). He concieved man as organic mixture of the materials of the universe, it is a synthetic universe or universe in a small scale. Man is constituted of physical matter of the animal kingdom, the animal ability to feel and desire, the simple intellect corresponding to higher animals now dead and it is
the soul which only makes the true man. It is the soul which constitutes man's essence which is immortal. Birth and death ought to be treated from the point of changes in matter rather than in our self is. Vivekananda writes - "The earliest idea is that when man is annihilated something lives and goes on living even after the man is dead". Our body is not soul for while the body is perishable but the soul is immortal. The soul is the Atman which is neither mind nor the body. The Atman has neither form nor shape and time. It is Omnipresent and Infinite. This infinite nature of the soul leads to the idea of oneness. The individual souls are not real. The Real man is, therefore, is one Infinite, Omnipresent and Spirit. And the Apparent man is only a limitation of the Realman. The Real man is the spirit, beyond space and time. The Apparent man, the reflection is limited by time and space and causation and it is bound. Every soul is infinite, it has no birth and death. The Atman is the Real man which is unchangeable, immoveable and absolute. It being universal it is present everywhere, there is but one life, one existence. The teaching of Vedanta is that everything is one. The difference is in degree and not in kind. He says - "All is one which manifests itself either as thought or life or soul or body and the difference is only in degree. As such we have no right to look down with
contempt upon those who are not developed exactly in the same degree as we are. 63

Vivekananda looks upon man as a unity, not divided into sects, creeds, castes and class. This unity of man gives stress on synthesis of his interest. Science and technology has provided man with things of utility in abundance. But neither science nor politics can give man peace and happiness or sense of fulfilment. The utilitarian values proceed only from religion and morality. Science and politics can nourish the lower self of man. Vivekananda maintained that man in the course of development and self expression gives rise to various forces, physical, mental, social or political and the development of his forces requires to be matched by a parallel development of his inner spiritual forms which can only provide him the factors of stability to an evolving personality or social system. If science and politics want to make progress in the development of natural and social environment along with it there must be spiritual progress of man which alone can be adequate for his real development in terms of which Vivekananda tried to explain man.

Vivekananda is of opinion that man is potentially divine. This potential divinity of man is the universal ground of human
relationship. To quote in his own words - "Never forget the glory of human nature, we are the greatest God ..... Christ and Buddha are but waves on the boundless ocean, which I am". He is the highest man who can say - 'I know all about myself'. Vivekananda maintained that man is already free and perfect and hence the question of perfection does not arise. It is we who mistaking our divine nature and our own self compel us to seek for realisation of God. He says - "After long search here and there, in temples and in churches, in earths and heaven at last we come back completing the circle from where you started to your own soul and find that 'He' for whom you have been seeking ...... is in your own self".

Vivekananda holds the view that the basis of our ignorance is the finite. We mistake universal self for our little bodies. He says - "As soon as I think I am a little body, I want to preserve it, to protect it ...... then I and you become separate. As soon as this idea of separation, it opens the door of mischief and leads to misery ...... all material knowledge adding fuel to fire, only going into hands of selfishman more instrument to what belong to others, to live upon life of others instead of giving up his life for them".

Vivekananda formulates the content and meaning of man’s life when he is a slave of nature. This is clear when he says—

"The awakening of the soul to its bondage and its effort to stand up and assert itself—this is called life."\(^\text{67}\) Success in the struggle is called evolution. The eventful victory rests on when slavery is thrown away—and this is salvation, Nirvana or Freedom. According to him the ultimate goal of all individuals soul as well as man taken together is re-uniting with Brahman, with God, the so-called 'release'. It is realisation as he says—"I am He and He is I. I stand if I shut my eyes and try to conceive my existence—'I' 'I' 'I'"\(^\text{68}\)

Hence, Vivekananda in his attempt to interpret man tried to interpret the fundamental spiritual truth about man in modern terms so as to regenerate man-kind by bridging the old with the new, the East and the West. The principal teaching is—realisation of the essential identity of man’s own self with the supreme self, Brahman that dwells in every individual as the innermost self.

3.7 CONCEPT OF SELF-REALISATION — MOKSHA:

All the Indian thoughts save a few centring round the Upanishadic view accept that man is a spiritual entity. He is
divine by nature. Vivekananda holds this view firmly. He interpreted the spiritual truths so as to enlighten mankind on the problem of human existence. To him the purpose of his life is to be one with One – the Absolute or to seek his real nature. Unlike Western thinkers Vivekananda made a distinction between mind and spirit, Atman. The aim of life is the realisation of this Atman which is Jiva in bondage. Man can attain perfection only through spirituality which is way to Moksa or Liberation.

According to Vivekananda human soul is eternal, immortal, perfect, infinite. Death of a man belongs to physical body, not of the soul. Death is only a change from one body to another. The present life is determined by our past actions. But the soul goes on evolving up or revealing back from one birth to another, from one death to another death. But all these ideas should not lead us to think that man is a helpless creature moving hither and thither at the mercy of good and bad activities – a helpless wreck in an ever-rushing currents of cause and effect. Vivekananda stood up before the world and called upon the people: "Here ye children of immortal bliss, even ye that reside the higher spheres. I have found that the Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusions. By knowing Him alone will be what saved from death over again". He brought out the message of
hope to the people and asked them to shake off the delusion that they are weak. He writes - "Come up O lions and shake off your delusions that you are sheep. You are souls, immortal spirits, free blessed and eternal ...... Man is the source of immorality, has infinite power, infinite strength and not a helpless creature." He opined that man is sure to attain liberation, if he gets three rare things - (1) Human mind is the highest reflection of God as man is God's own image, (ii) Man must have the intense desire to be free (iii) the preceptor who has already crossed the ocean of delusions.

Vivekananda tends to define self by using the concept of Real man. His concept of self is demonstrative for him, not objective, physical and mental inclination that distinguishes one man from another that his abstract realisation of his unity with Brahman. The real individual is the Absolute. But it is erroneous to think that in this case Vivekananda was a semi-orthodox theologian. But he while changing the accent in the contents of social system he brought forward component of social significance. His views are pregnant with the elements of a new approach to his self. He tried to connect the individuals with society, contrasted nature of Real man with individualist characteristics and was a aspirant of general liberation of the
One of the characteristics of Indian philosophy is that it takes a composite view of man and his life and present before him two ideals each is complementary to the other. It concerns with both material and spiritual aspect of life. One is 'Abhudaya' and the other is 'Nishraya' and combining together provide for the physical and spiritual needs of man. Material prosperity is essential for the healthy growth of spiritual life. The philosophical aim of India is always spiritual perfection. Happiness and comforts provided by material prosperity is the means to achieve spiritual perfection. Vivekananda was aware of the workings of human nature. In common surating with the Indian religio-philosophical ideal he recognised four ideals of human life - Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksa. All of these need satisfaction. But spiritual realisation or Moksa is the ultimate aim that is sought to be achieved with the help either these values.

According to Vivekananda pravritti and Nirbritti are the two forces which are working in the life of man. Pravritti resolves towards the world 'I' and 'mine', it includes all those materials which always enrichess 'Me' by matter, name, fame etc. Nirbritti resolves away all these mundane things meant
for physical satisfaction. When the pravritti of man begins to disappear there begins morality and religion. According to Vivekananda the very self-abnegation in man is known as perfection. This self-abnegation is the uniting point of Karma, Bhakti and Jnana yoga. It opines that nobody should have the idea that he can do something for the world. He writes - "The world does not require any help from you. It is sheer nonsense on the part of any man to think that he is born to help the world. ...... Each one of our yogas is fitted to make man perfect even without the help of others because all have the same goal in view". He also opines that the learned know that though apparently different from each other, they at least lead to the same goal of human perfection. Commenting on the self-abnegation Swami Bhajananda writes - "Vivekananda did not just descent upon perfection of morality but he tried to elucidate the concrete stages on the way to attain it. Perfection is attained by gradual abnegation first of egoistic cares and desires for the sake of one's family, then of the narrow interests of the family for the sake of one's friends and by self-abnegation for the sake of the people, of the motherland, by reminding everything and being ready to sacrifice his very life for the good of the country...... such interpretation of the category of self-denial meant over-stepping the limits of traditional Vedantism on the way to
practical task of modern life of which got fired with socio-economic content. He holds the view that any man can attain perfection by faithfully discharging his duties in the stage of life he is placed. He writes - "When a man has fulfilled his duties and obligation of the stage of life in which he is born and his aspirations lead him to seek a spiritual life, to abandon altogether his worldly pursuits of possession, fame or power ...... when he seeks the truth, the Eternal Love, the refuge.

Vivekananda is of opinion that Freedom or Mukti, Truth and God are synonymous. True love and affective beneficial works are possible only to those who are free. And this is the reason that his life and teachings were directed towards stressing on freedom and also he appealed to the people all over the world to realise freedom. All other works, disciplines or sadhanas must be oriented to that purpose and justified on that ground. He says - "Freedom was his soul and spirit, the passion and power underlying his life and works and the burden of his message." He also writes - "It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body to cast it off like wornout garment. But I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire everywhere untill the world shall know that it is one with God."
His concept of Mukti is a mighty and all-inclusive ideal where there is no place for any kind of pettiness, weakness or fear. He once said - "You will go to hell if you seek for your own salvation". He appealed to the people to kill the desire for personal Mukti and regarded the desire for killing personal Mukti as the greatest of all spiritual disciplines. He writes - "Liberation is only for him who gives up everything for others whereas the others who tax their brains day and night harping 'my salvation', 'my salvation' wander about with their true-being ruined present and perspective .... selfishness is the great sin, one who thinks that he will get Mukti before others is a selfish man ....". He appealed to the people to shun all kinds of selfishness. One who does for the benefit of others is a man of content. He derived utmost peace of mind for dedicating his life for the service of others. He said to Sister Nivedita - "........I look back and scarcely find any action which I have done for myself, so Cristine I am content".

He did not even aspire for his own salvation though he regarded liberation as the highest stage of man's life at the cost of life of others. "Now I have no desire for Mukti. I do not care for it so long an individual in the universe remain without attempting it."
Vivekananda opined that man is free, born free. He said - "Remember that I am free - free - born free .... Mukti is my religion .... I leave none bound, take no bounds". He had bondage he himself admitted in that love and service to souls in distress.

According to Vivekananda man has parrenial urge for attaining freedom. All the struggles undertaken by man are really to attain freedom. He says - "Freedom is the motive force of the universe, freedom is it's goal. This universal struggle freedom attains it's highest expression in man in the conscious duties to be free".

Vivekananda is of opinion that when a man attains realisation nothing is visible to his physical appearances. The realised soul only becomes aware of his divine nature. He remains as it is physically, it is only change in his attitude towards life and the universe. He discharges his duties as a normal human being in regard to his physical needs are concerned. To express the idea of Sri RamKrishna - "One does not grow a pair of horns after realisation. What takes place in him is an inner transformation. His attitude towards the world changes, his emotions become chastened and refined and his reactions and responses to outer situation and inner
responses become entirely different from those of ordinary human being and perceives the divine essence. And his self-knowledge makes him realise his own identity with all ....

Vivekananda also said - "Even here (on earth) the relative existence is overcome by those whose mind is established in equality. God is flawless and the same in all. Therefore all these (passions) are established in God".

Thus Vivekananda stressed the importance for the regeneration of man's individuality. His concept of individuality has a spiritual basis in essence more than supreme self. Each individual is a spirit living in a body. The realisation of this consciousness and manifestation of the individual spiritual content is the same with the universal unity that is the only truth - is the end of all Indian religio-philosophical systems. The ideal of man should be to cross the limits of egoism and enter step by step the great and unlimited realm of individual thought and cosmic unity. Vivekananda holds the view that spiritual idealism should be given proper footing to bring the spirit of harmony and universality.

3.8 HUMANISTIC FEATURES:

In India, since the ancient times life assuring humanistic ideas have been formed the foundation of Indian world outlook.
The ideas have been expressed in religio-philosophical form and developed in such a way that it paved the way for constant struggle against scholastic, ascetic and passive contemplation of the world. Being imbued with the traditional foundation of humanistic features of India Vivekananda tried to maintain it throughout his life. Truly speaking, it is difficult to understand the distinctions with the humanistic basis of contemporary religio-philosophical culture without taking into account Vivekananda. He assimilated and modified the religio-philosophical teachings of Vedanta turning them into condition of a new life. He pointed out that Vedanta reconciles the actual to the ideal. It stands for truth, harmony and oneness. It springs forth the spirit of selfless service, mutual co-operation among individuals obsessed with freedom and equality. As Vivekananda involves the ideal of social life it perfects social system. As a Vedantist, "Vivekananda, as Swami Ranganathananda maintains, - "....... made Indian philosophy concerns itself with problems of common man ..... he brings down Vedanta to fertilise the field of common life". Vivekananda's assumption of human purity elevates the place of man in society and universe. He maintained that there is nothing above and beyond man. To elevate man he identified man with God. To quote in his own words - "The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body". He also said - "Of course, all animals are temples too but man is the
highest, the Tajmahal of temples. Man is the highest being that exists and this is the greatest world. He even wants to the extent of personification of the highest divine substance Brahman with the ordinary living people and put forward the idea that to worship man is to worship God. He insisted on the alround development of human personality and asserted the right to happiness in the world. Through his active humanism he instilled in man sense of dignity, sense of responsibility for his own destiny and destiny of all people to make them strive for the ideal of good, truth and justice. He germinated in man abhorance for any kind of suffering. Hence, Chelyser observes - "The humanistic ideal of man is to a certain degree identical with Gorkkey's 'Man' - with a capital letter. For the first time in India he brought out qualitively new humanism which played an important part in the general upsurge of national consciousness and the struggle of Indian people for independence. But his humanistic concept was not confined, however, to the four walls of India. The essence of his teaching was the universality God and his accessibility both in form and without form, the divinity of man, respect and understanding of all religious, the equality and brotherhood of man, renunciation of personal ego and service of man especially who were poor, illiterate,
disinherited 'Daridranarayana' of the world.

Commenting on the then downfall of India he said - "I consider that the greatest national sin is neglect of masses and that is one the causes of our downfall". To him the primary duties are to pay attention to the masses, their suffering and misfortunes. He upheld the view that humanism which stands for rationalism is incomplete which is devoid of human love and identity. It is the amalgamation of Advaitic 'Love' or 'Oneness' with humanity that helps in fostering humanism in society. That is why he repeatedly told us that man is not only to be loved but also to be worshipped for God is love. This love is not to be identified with ordinary love that is practiced in ordinary life. It is something deeper, something higher which needs cultivation. He defined love with Vedantic spirit - experience of 'oneness' which leads to unity. It is the attraction between soul and soul, something divine, not at all physical in nature. He advocated for the abolition of any kind of privilege that exists in society and barrier, social or national. He made people to realise the meaninglessness of all these and the reality of Vedantic concept of the goal of humanity.

According to Vivekananda individual salvation is incomplete without the total salvation of mind. Sister Nivedita writes -
"The priceless memory he has left with us who know him that - 'there is no other thing so great as this love of man'.

Vivekananda said - "I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments and may I born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, sum total of all souls and above all, my God as the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship". He believed in man equally as he believed in God. He was ready even to go to hell to serve others. Commenting on his humanism Romain Rollanad writes - "It is wonderful that he kept in his feverish hands to the end the equal balance of the two poles - burning love for the Absolute (the Advaita) and irresistible appeal to suffering humanity and what marks him so appealing to us that at those times equilibrium was no longer possible and he had to make a choice and it was the latter that won the day".

Vivekananda did not rest satisfied with mere sympathy and compassion for the oppressed people. He was also busy with chalking out programmes that would enable him to eradicate social inequality. He did not approve the then social reformation made by certain enlightened people of India. Reacting on them he said - "You talk of social reform? What do you do? All that
you mean by our social reform either widow marriage or female emancipation and something of the sort of a reform may do good to a few no doubt, of what avail that to the whole nation. He wanted to bring about radical reform, a revolutionary change in the social system. His humanistic Advaita or spiritual humanism aims at not only inner purity of man but all attempts to perfect society by eliminating environmental weakness of society. He realised that economic poverty stands in the way to humanism. He declared war against poverty. His slogan was - 'First bread and then the religion' He made a loud protest against existing social customs and evils and condemned hierarchical caste system and untouchability. He even condemned the concept of sin and said - the difference between a saint and a sinner is in the degree of manifestation of spirituality. His humanism was positive and not negative in character as Dr. S.L. Mukherjee observes - 'The message of humanism remained inchoate till Vivekananda came and restored the people confidence in their own faculties'.

Vivekananda was well-aware of the strength of the toiling masses. He put much confidence on them for he believed that it is the toiling masses that form the true body of any society. So he imparted the message of faith, strength and courage to
these toiling masses. He wanted to make strong. It is by this positive strength that he wanted to make man a man and raise the country from slumber and inactivity because he understood the active role of the masses in the historical development of the country. He thought that the influence and power of Khatriya and the wealth of the Baisyas are possible only owing to the physical work of the Sudras. But he was at pain to see the deplorable condition of the masses. In order to raise the down trodden whom he believed to be 'Daridranarayan' he wanted to bring about radical reform, a revolutionery change in the social system. In solving the inequality he placed hope in the good will and magnimity of the propetied class. He gave clarion call to the upper class to comedown and to elevate the poor by life long sacrifice. He altogether condemned priviledge enjoyed by a handful of people. He stpoke at the very root of priviledge and said - "I am clever in mending shoes, you are clever in reading the Vadas, but there is no reason why you should trample on my head. .... caste is good, that is the only natmal way of solving life. Man must form themselves into groups and you can get rid of that. Wherever you go, there will be caste. But that does not mean that should be priviledge. They should be knocked on the head". He interpreted caste system on the basis of vocation in life and not out the basis of birth. According to
Jati, the category of life, an individual chooses to live in.

This total rejection of privilege is the central theme of Vivekananda’s Karma-yoga as well as Advaita. "Each is great in its own place" was his oft quoted dictum. He was also aware of the fact that a voice of protest from the toiling class must come before long. He believed - "The lower gradually awakening to the fact and making a united effort against their determined to exact their legitimate dues". He again said - "when the masses will wake up they will come to understand your oppression of them and by a puff of their mouth you will be entirely blown away. It is they who introduced civilization amongst you and it is they will then put it down ....... therefore, I say, try to raise lower classes from slumber by imparting learning and culture to them when they will make and awaken they must, they will not forget your good services to them and will remain grateful to you". All these appeals of Vivekananda had only one purpose to inspire the people to fight for their rights, to instill confidence and strength to their hearts.

Vivekananda was optimistic in holding the view that his cherished social order might come into existence when Brahminical spirituality, Khatriya’s political administrative talents, the Baishya’s knowledge of economic development and Sudra’s capacity for labour will be harmoniously combined both in individual and
social life of the people. This may be regarded as the index of Vivekananda's socialism, the two pillars of which are (i) the equal opportunity for all, (ii) the equal respect for the inherent divinity in all
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