CHAPTER - III
Vivekananda’s View on Religion
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3.1 Vivekananda’s Concept of Religion

_The Vedanta is the rationale of all religions. Without the Vedanta every_ 
religion is superstition; with it everything becomes religion._

*Vivekananda*

Religion is the most comprehensive whole of human existence because it embraces every facts of life. It is an experience of life revealed through the individual’s conscious aspiration for the realisation of an ideal intuitively felt. This intuitive feeling is just the luminous element in our religious consciousness and is again the non-rational counterpart of our knowledge of the infinite. Our knowledge of the infinite comprehends everything which ultimately corresponds in us a sense of unity and oneness with all. Religion as expressed in human life involves all faculties of man. Intellect is only one of the aspects of life. Though in religion we find the intellectual side, but its practical side is simultaneously very important. The deeper urge in man leads him to rise above the egoistic view and makes him to realise the true nature of the Self. So writes Tagore “Within us we have a hope which always walks in front of our present narrow experience; it is the undying faith in the infinite in us”.(1)

_For Vivekananda religion is the feeling of Reality. It is never a creation of principles but always a spiritual discovery. The characteristic mark of religious experience is directness, joy vividness and like._ He does not accept any religious act which fails to promote religion as an experience. So religion may be a bewildering study but never a vain speculation.(2) ‘Human language is the attempt to express the truth that is within. The difference between one form of expression and another is a difference of degree rather than of kind. As a result of which different religions have developed their own doctrines and dogmas. This makes religion to claim supreme authority over the other. To this Vivekananda observes that it becomes only a phase of patriotism to profess any religion. Patriotism is always partial.(3)
The message of Vivekananda is tuned with Oriental Idealism. But in order to make idealism 'practical oriented', he tried to make religion free from the bundles of metaphysics, theologies, ceremonies and logic. Every truth is eternal. Since religion is the expression of such truth, so it must be made simple. Only simple truth can penetrate every pore of human society. Truth is the nature of all souls. Religion will become meaningful only when the reality in every existence will be the object of worship. Here lies the essence of Vedanta philosophy. This deep rooted spiritual humanism is the central theme of Hinduism and Hindu religion. Vivekananda, thus expressed, 'One word of truth can never be lost. It may be covered with the rubbish but it is sure to be uncovered sooner or later. Truth, virtue and purity are all indestructible'.

Man has taken centuries to find out this true nature of himself. He is not what he appears to be but someone greater. Religious thought, says Vivekananda, is in man's very constitution. It is impossible for him to give up religion so long as he holds up his mind and body. As long as one thinks, this religious struggle must go on and one will have some form of religion. This view of Vivekananda contradicts Freudian conception of religion. Sigmund Freud in his book, 'The Future of an Illusion', explains that religion is not real. Religion is an illusion. He conceives that religion originates from the crisis and helpless nature of man. Just like the children fulfill their desires depending on their parents, similarly when they grow up, gods and goddesses substitute their parents. All objects of worship are self created father and mother substitutes. Gods can save mankind in moments of crises. To quote Enrich Fromm, who explains the Freudian concept of Religion thus, ...... “religion has its origin in man's helplessness in confronting the forces of nature outside and the instinctive forces within himself".

Vivekananda’s approach towards religion resonance the philosophical perspective of the Upanishads. This feeling of him is revealed from his ‘Sayings and Utterances His principle in life is essentially determined by the quintessence of the Vedas and Vedanta. This lies in strength and fearlessness.

This Veda is our only authority, and everyone has the right to it ......

Thus says the Shukla Yajur Veda (XXVI.2)

But the Puranas on the other hand put social injunctions. It says that a certain caste has no right to study them. But the Veda does not put any social injunctions. The Smritis
Puranas, Tantras .... all these are acceptable only so far as they agree with the Vedas. But that portions which are found contradictory have to be rejected. It is these portions which have made our religion weak and unreliable. To quote Vivekananda in this context, 'How I wish that day will soon come when in every home the Veda will be worshipped together with Shalagrama, the household Deity, when the young, the old, and the women will inaugurate the worship of the Veda!'\(^8\) So to say the word ‘Religion’ finds its explanation in the philosophy of Vivekananda as, ‘... Essentially religion belongs to the super sensuous plane. It is beyond all reasoning. It is never determined by the plane of intellect. It is a vision, an inspiration, a plunge into the unknown and unknowable, making the unknowable more than known ....’\(^9\). This search of the unknown is present from the very beginning of humanity.

Kabindranath Tagore’s attempt in explaining religion also recognizes the same spirit. He too opines that religion comes from within. Tagore represents a well-knit philosophy of life. He has embraced the metaphysical as well as the mundane life in his philosophy of aesthetics. Spirituality is ultimately connected with beauty in his religion. Religion thus consists in the endeavour of men to cultivate and express those qualities which are inherent in the nature of Man the Eternal and to have faith in Him.\(^10\)

In the Oriental tradition there is no such clear-cut cleavage between philosophy and religion. Necessity has never aroused to interpret philosophy in terms of religion. Here religion and philosophy are two sides of human activity. One supports the other. In religious consciousness every thing is found in its own unique and individual value. In Vivekananda’s religious philosophy, philosophy and religion are consistent with each other. Both have their identical justification from the Noumena because he has identified Religion with Vedanta. As a matter of fact it is the realisation of ‘Oneness’ which is the religious awareness of infinite more or less possessed by all religious trend in Indian philosophy. This realisation of ‘Oneness’ has made Vivekananda to draw parallel between the beliefs of Hinduism and the basic theories of modern science, which “seem like echoes” of “the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy”.\(^11\)

Real truth in any field of knowledge will not contradict itself. Knowledge when comes from inside can overcome every scientific justification. Religion must be justified by the discoveries of reason. All that is dross must be taken out. Only the essential parts
of religion will emerge triumphant out of this investigation. Science deals with the material universe. Religion on the other hand deals with the subtle realm of the mind in which the universe is perceived. To such a view, says Vivekananda, that religion is an extension of science.\textsuperscript{(12)}

Religious inquiry is a science in its own right when it follows the internal path appropriate to its own field. It again tests its finding by reason and verifies its reasoning by experience. Like any physical sciences, religion moves toward broader generalization, unless and until it becomes an all embracing principle. To this view Vivekananda reconciles science and Advaita Vedanta because the fundamental principle of knowledge is common to both. This actually discards nothing but increases the quality of everything. Vivekananda thus insists, “Advaita ...... the non-duality, the Oneness the idea of the Impersonal God, is the only religion that can have any hold on any intellectual people”.\textsuperscript{(14)}

In the physical domain every discovery of the hidden forces of nature contributes to our well being. Similarly in our spiritual domain the soul depends on the discovery of some hidden eternal truths. It is possible only through strong determination and endeavour. Tagore says, Man gives the name spiritual discipline (Dharma Sadhana). \textsuperscript{(14)} Vivekananda too has observed, “Art, science and Religion are but three different ways of expressing a single truth”.\textsuperscript{(15)}

All religions of the world claim that there is a unity within us. But Vivekananda guards us against this unity in every religion. Being one with divinity, there cannot be any further progress. Science of religion cannot further progress if religion finds this perfect unity. It is only out of diversity comes advancement. If diversity stops, creation will be destroyed. It is because of variations in thoughts religious sects are multiplying. For Vivekananda, it is ‘Unity in Variety’ ..... the sign of progress in religion. ‘Contradiction come from the same truth adopting itself to the varying circumstances of different natures. And these little variations are necessary for purposes of adaptation. But in the heart of everything the same truth resigns’.\textsuperscript{(16)}

Real religion rises above mythology. Modern science has really made the foundation of religion strong. The whole universe can be demonstrated into one. The metaphysician’s being and the physicist’s matter are just one. The atom is invisible unthinkable and the cause of everything. Similarly for the Vedantist, the potency of the
universe depends on the Atman. So there is no real fight between modern science and Vedanta as both regard a self-evolving cause. The comprehensive study of religion must not aim at finding perfect unity amongst different religious practices. Only scientific undertaking requires to look at the facts from objective standpoint, free from biasness and prejudice. 'Truth alone triumphs, not untruth. Through truth alone is opened the way to God'. Do not care for a moment who joins hands with you or not, be sure that you touch the hand of the Lord.(17) To deal with a religion objectively is to describe and interpret the inner events and meanings without prejudice and with sympathetic understanding. The study of religion is a science, which requires a sensitive and artistic heart. (18)

In this view Romain Rolland has also observed that Vivekananda never aimed at unifying the observances of various rites and ceremonies of various creeds and sects. He moreover never apprehended any Taylorism of thought in religious consciousness. Vivekananda could not have many spiritual modes for the music of Brahman.(19) Preaching of religion generally depends on faith. But this preaching consists only in different sects of theories which are based upon belief. These theories ultimately lead to all confusions and quarrelling with one another. Religion at this juncture becomes a pretension of truth and depend on wonder working. Every fear of the unknown becomes a childish curiosity when the Truth is attained. This can be achieved only through purity, patience and perseverance. There must be no fear. No begging but demanding ....... demanding the Highest.(20)

Kant has discovered in philosophy that time, space and causation are modes of thought. Vedanta taught this ages ago and called it Maya. Unlike Schopenhauer and Shankaracharya,(21) Vivekananda maintains that religion knows no limitation because logic is within the realm of maya. 'He' is beyond every categories. For this reason grace is above all contradictions. ".... Reason, theories, .... are all help of religion .... religion itself consists in realisation". (22) Bhakti is the thread which binds the lowest form of worship with the highest form of love. Religion requires us to gather empirical facts and to verify them, but it is essential on our parts to see the truth. This is possible only when we go beyond the knowledge which lies in the religion of the five senses. To see God is the one goal. Power is not the goal. The test of having ceased to be an idolater, Vivekananda suggests: When you say 'I', does the body come into your thought or not? If it does, then you are still a worshipper of idols. Religion is experience.(23)
Rudolf Otto’s view about Religious Consciousness comes very near to Vivekananda. Otto was aware of the difficulties involved in interpreting religion in terms of our belief in God. For him the existence of God can not be proved on rational ground. At the source of every religion there is a non-rational awareness which Otto calls the numinous feeling. The mystics call this as intuitive experience. Though William James has denied religious feeling yet acknowledged that “feeling is the deeper source of religion, and that philosophic and theological formulas are secondary products, like translations of a text to another tongue”. Radhakrishnan too significantly remarks that the essence of religion is not in the dogmas, creeds, rites and ceremonies. It is in the deepest wisdom of the sages. The different apprehensions of religious thought are only the varied historical expressions of the one truth. This Truth is eternal.

Hegel, being an absolute idealist, regards religion as a self-subsisting essence. Religion which is thus a transcendental entity, we find underlying all particular historical manifestations. According to him the aim of philosophy is to know the truth, to know God because He is the absolute truth. In his rationalistic philosophy, Hegel advocates that truth is an elaborate speculative system claiming objective validity. Religion is a self-subsisting essence or a transcendental entity which underlies all particular historical manifestation. Reason and faith, for him, have nothing to do with reason of philosophy. Hegel’s interpretation of religion insists that religious insight is just similar to the popular form of insight found in philosophy. In other words, the faculty of reason is just at the source of religion.

Kierkegaard reacted against the philosophy of Hegel and the former demanded radical faith in religion. For Kierkegaard if religious knowledge goes beyond reason then it must be something irrational. This irrational can be apprehended by a unique mode of non-speculative personal apprehension called subjectivity. The essential objective of religious faith demands a practical commitment. Subjectivity in his philosophy means an awareness that results from the existential awareness of the individual. In his ‘Concluding Unscientific Postscript’, he confesses that speculative thought and Christianity are identical. It is the influence of the theological ‘olik’ which failed him to realise that religion is natural to man. Religion is the result of man’s natural numinous awareness. But in Vivekananda’s Advaita Vedanta, the subjective awareness is the realisation of the
transcendental truth ....... The Atman in its own nature. To realise the Unchangeable One is the religion for all. One who has come to see God face to face and sees God alone in everything is a Rishi. Then only religion begins for us. (29) Here Vivekananda is not influenced by the theological olik like Kierkegaard. The subjectivity in Vivekananda’s philosophy is tuned with monism. For he asserts that there is only one Individual. Each of us is That. Oneness alone is love and fearlessness. Separation leads to hatred and tear. This is his Vedantic gospel which constitutes the religion of the Hindus. (30)

Schleiermacher’s view is akin to Vivekananda. According to the former, true religion is the ‘sense and taste for the Infinite’. (31) Religion consists not in a theological system but in man’s soul. The starting point of religion starts in looking within at the ‘pious’ soul. Each historical religion is distinct and essentially impure form of religion. But through multiplicity of these religions the essence of pure religion is actually manifested. Like Vivekananda, Schleiermacher observes that outward forms does not constitute true religion but through the earthly religions (so called religion by culture) reflects the primordial essence of true religion. For both again religion is reflected through ‘Unity in Diversity’ and such unity is possible only due to the transcendental unity of very historical religions. Vivekananda’s conviction too, that man has religion in his soul itself. Hence the aim of all religions is to realise God in the soul. This is his concept of universal religion. The greatest name man every gave to God is Truth. Therefore we must seek it within the soul.

The words ‘religion’ and ‘sect’ have a different meaning in India than in the West. Religion according to him, embraces all religions. We tolerate everything except intoleration. Sect embraces those sweet people who say we are right and others are wrong. Sects must multiply in manifold in order to provide people ample opportunities to select any one of them according to their own choice. “...... So I want sects to multiply in every country, that more people may have a chance to be spiritual”, (32) says Vivekananda. So opines Sri Aurobindo too that western revolt against religion is based on what he calls ‘religionism’. Eastern religion becomes true when it becomes the law of life. True religion is spiritual religion. Religionism is concerned basically with the narrow laws of dogmas, ceremonies and sectarian rigid laws. The evils of religion like everything else depends on its infra-rational parts. The basic error lies in the ignorance of human confusion of religion.
with a particular creed, sect, cult, religious society or church. (33)

It is this same thought which Vivekananda has shared with the messages of his Master. (Ramakrishna Paramahamsa) God is expressed through the innate harmony of different religions. Religious life is possible only through vairagya or renunciation. It is the beginning of religion. The Alpha and Omega of renunciation is “Giving up” says the Veda, “give up”. It is by giving up alone immortality is reached. (34) To Mahatma Gandhi, the central teaching of the Gita is the renunciation of the fruit of action. This renunciation can cultivated with the principle of Ahimsa in every shape and form. (35) Renunciation is possible for those people who are just above the laws of the mundane world.

Radhakrishnan too holds a high view for renunciation in the progress of realisation. Renunciation for him is not fleeing from the world. It is only slaying the ego-sense. Religious experience is of a self – certifying character. It is svatassiddha. It carries its own credentials. Religion rests on faith. Religion itself is faith or intuition. There can be no difference between reason and intuition. ‘Beliefs that foster and promote the spiritual life of the soul must be in accordance with the nature and the laws of the world of reality with which it is their aim to bring us into harmony’. (36)

To Vivekananda the ideal religion is called Yoga .... Union. To the worker it is union between men and the whole of humanity. To the mystic it is between his lower and Higher Self. Again to the lover, union is attained between himself and the God of Love. To the philosopher, it is union of all existence. This is Yoga in India. (37) The ideal religion is the harmonious balance of four directions as found in the various natures of mankind. All the various religions and creeds at last come into Thee, says the Vedantist Ramakrishna became a living verification of this fact, which the world had seen. He is said to have realised through his own mystical experiences, into a systematic philosophica-statements .... ‘Jato mat tato path’ (38) (All faiths are true, as many faiths, so many paths).

The nineteenth century renaissance movement had a tremendous effect in vigorous attempt for this universal religion. Even Keshab Chandra Sen harboured earnestly for such a universal religion by embracing every diversities. In the words of Sen to put it “One religion shall be acknowledged by all men. Yet each nation shall have its own peculiar and free mode of action ......... So shall the various races and tribes and nations of the world, with their own peculiar voice and music, sing His glory, but all thei
different voices and modes of chanting small ammingle in one sweet and swelling chorous ...... one universal anthem”.\(^{(39)}\) This view of Sen illustrates his unique way of analysing the feeling of nationalism characterised by spiritualism.

The most distinctive feature in Vivekananda’s religious philosophy is his comprehensive and integral vision. His remarkable world – wide contribution in the sphere of religion is the ‘Religion for Mankind’. His religion is above every distinctions of race, nationality, culture, creed, and the like. He has seen the divine self of man. Man, for Vivekananda, is the symbolic expression of the Divinity. ‘Divinity of Man’ and ‘Essential spirituality’ of life are thus the two fundamental outstanding truths of Vivekananda’s Religious Philosophy.\(^{(40)}\) Satprakashananda puts in this view that in Vivekananda the universal spirit has found a loving, dynamic and all – encompassing expression which is rarely to be found elsewhere.\(^{(41)}\) Religion is thus a synonymous with Universalism of the spirit. It is only when ‘religious’ conceptions have attained to this Universalism, religion is fully realised. It is a matter for the future than the past. So it has just began. To evolve a consistent Universal Religion, Vivekananda’s clarion call to the world in the Parliament of Religion was ---

“Help and not Fight”, “Assimilation and not Destruction”, “Harmony and Peace and not Dissension”.\(^{(42)}\)

Thus in its continuous march it reminds us the watch word of Vivekananda’s philosophy,

_Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached. Arise, awake ! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak ; the soul is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient._\(^{(43)}\)

3.2 Books :

There are number of books written in Bengali by Vivekananda. Later on many of these books are translated in English. Books of Vivekananda can be divided into four main categories.

(A) Books written by Vivekananda.

(B) Books written on Vivekananda by his disciples and many others.
(C) Periodicals, Pamphlets, Newspapers.
(D) Booklets.

4 (i) In addition to these there are different published books containing either Letters, Talks, Lectures or 'Conversations and Dialogues' of Vivekananda. There are again many other books in condensed form; containing the 'Ideas' of Vivekananda. Certain collections of these writings can be found even in the series 'Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda'.

(A) (i) In this category we have the 'Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda'. This contains collections of writings of Vivekananda, published in a series of 8 Vols. Mayavati, Pithoragarh, Himalayas.

   This series of work is also found in Bengali. The title of the series is 'Swami Vivekananda Bani O Rachana.'

2. Science and Philosophy of Religion.
4. Raja – Yoga.
6. Bhakti – Yoga, etc. etc.

   These books are published by the Advita Ashrama, Calcutta.

7. Awakener of Modern India. Published by Madras Math.

(B) In this category we find books written both by his Eastern and Western Disciples. We are mentioning only few of them.

1. There is a series in 2 Vols. written on 'The Life of Swami Vivekananda', By His Eastern and Western Disciples'. Published by Mayavati, Pithoragarh, Himalayas Publishing centre, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.
2. Vivekananda The Man And His Message, By His Eastern and Western Disciples Published : Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.
3. Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda, By His Eastern and Western Admires Published : Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.
4. The series in 6 Vols. written by Marie Louise Burke on 'Swami Vivekananda in the West.' Published : Mayavati, Pithoragarh, Himalayas. Publishing centre : Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.


(C) The periodicals are mostly monthly.

1. Prabuddha Bharata (Awakened India) is a monthly periodical. Published by Mayavati, Himalayas. It was started by Vivekananda in the year 1896.

2. Udbodhan is a monthly periodical in Bengali. It is published by the Udbodhan Office, Calcutta. It was started from the year 1899.

3. Brahmavadin: Published from Madras.

4. Vedanta and the West: Published from Hollywood, California.

5. Vedanta Kesari is a monthly Journal. It is published by the Sri Rama Krishna Math, Madras, started for the year 1914.


There are also many other Pamphlets.

(D) Booklets: There are number of booklets containing the ideologies of Vivekananda. Only few are mentioned below.

1. Message of Vivekananda.

2. Ramakrishna and Vivekananda by Nehru.

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These are published from Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.

4. Vivekananda Writes to You.
5. Vivekananda Speaks to You. Both (4 and 5) are from Madras Publication Center

4. (i) Under this category we have
   (1) Lectures from Colombo to Almora.
   (2) Letters of Swami Vivekananda.
   (3) What Religion Is in the words of Vivekananda (Ed,) Swami Vidyatmananda
   (4) Talks with Swami Vivekananda.

The following books are in condensed form.
   (5) Philosophical and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda.
   (6) Nationalistic and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda ...... Retold by
       Swami Tapasyananda. These books are published from the Publishing Center
       Advaita Ashrama. Calcutta.

3.3 Vivekananda’s Concept of God

   Vain are the thousand creeds
   That move men’s hearts : unutterably vain;
   Worthless as withered weeds,
   Or idlest froth amid the boundless main,

   Emily Brontë

Primitive religion in almost every country was tribal rather than personal. Different
rites and ceremonies were performed for the interests of the tribe, in respect of proper
functioning of earthly life. The ideal which men and women commonly worshipped from
ancient past is what is in themselves. Every person projects one’s own ideal on the outside
world and kneels before it. We find that men who are cruel and blood- thirsty conceive of
a blood – thirsty God. They can only love their own highest ideal. But men who could
transcend this cruelty of religious practices, have a very high ideal of God. Their ideal is
indeed very different from that of the other group.

In the West, religious Ideas are solely dependent on the New Testament and Christ
Religions are dependent upon mythology only. All sects, though speak the same thing but
in different words. The ‘Bible’ has become the basis of western religion which never
attempted to demonstrate the existence of God. The Bible takes God's reality for granted. While doing so it has never applied the philosophical reasoning. The biblical writers found absurd to prove the existence of God on logical arguments. ‘God was known to them as a dynamic will interacting with their own wills … a sheer given reality, as inescapable to be reckoned with as destructive storm and life-giving sunshine, or the hatred of their enemies and the friendship of their neighbors. The thought of God as an experienced reality rather than as an inferred entity’. 

The empiricists are in agreement with the Bible. But the rationalists, on the other hand, hold that to known means to be able to prove. The rationalists vehemently reject the attitude of the biblical writers. Descartes also held the view that we can know only truths that are self-evident or that can be reached by logical inferences from self-evident premises. So he tried to establish, first the existence of God and then through the argument that God would not allow us to be deceived, the veracity of sense perception.

In the important work, the Summa contra Gentiles, Thomas Aquinas on the other hand observes, ‘natural reason is deficient in the things of God; it can prove some parts of the faith, but not others. It can prove the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, but not the Trinity, the Incarnation, or the Last Judgement. Whatever is demonstrable is, so far as it goes, in accordance with the Christian faith, and nothing in revelation is contrary to reason’. Hamilton too, the western philosopher, has opined that the human intellect can give only a mere indication of the existence of God, the controller of this world and there its function ends. It is not in its power to reveal the nature of God. So here philosophy ends; and where philosophy ends there religion begins.

God in Indian Philosophy comes very near to the view of biblical writers. God is beyond all logical categories. But the reflections on God made by the Rishis are somewhat different from the western temperament. In this context, to express the view in the words of Vivekananda. ‘That is religion which makes us realise the Unchangeable One, and that is the religion for every one. He who realises transcendent truth, he who realises the Atman in his own nature, he who comes face to face with God, sees God alone in everything, has become a Rishi. There is no religious life for you until you have become a Rishi’. Then alone religion begins for us. With realization religion dawns upon us; otherwise we are only undergoing intellectual gymnastics and physical tortures.
Vivekananda opines that we have to understand the Hindus on spirituality, on religion, on God, on the soul, on the Infinite, on spiritual freedom. The Supreme Lord in India means Ishvara. This concept transcends the meaning of the ‘Personal God’ in the west. Vivekananda has emphatically stated “He from whom this universe proceeds, in whom it rests and to whom it returns, He is Ishvara, the Eternal, the Pure, the All-Merciful, the Almighty, the Ever-Free, the All-Knowing, The Teacher of all teachers, the Lord who of His own nature is inexpressible Love”. Moreover he conceives that the more we approach our real Self, the more the delusion vanishes. The more all differences and divisions disappear, the more we realise all as the one Divinity. God exists, but He is not the man setting upon a cloud. He is pure Spirit. He resides nearer to us than our very self. He is the Soul. We cannot perceive God as separate and different from our self. When we think of Him as some one separate from our self, we do not know Him. This is the doctrine of the prophets of India. One may be either a dualist or a monist, yet both are good Hindus as is the opinion of Vivekananda. That which exists One, sages call It by various names. Above all others, my country men, says he, this is the one grand truth that we have to teach to the world. The Gita emphasizes that they indeed have conquered Heaven even in this life whose mind has become fixed in sameness. God is pure and same to all. Therefore such a man is said to be in God. (Gita V, 19) Desire, ignorance and inequality ….. this is the trinity of bondage.

So Vivekananda observes that through every possible expressions of human mind ….. high or low, arrant fetishism or refined ritualism, every religion, consciously or unconsciously is a struggle towards God. Every vision of truth is a vision of Him that man acquires. Just as the water in a vessel absorbs the form of the container, so does God, which comes in different form is one. He is God in every case. From the ‘Prologue’, it becomes quite evident that the different religious order which was started to modernise Hinduism failed to give reply to the most curious question put before by Naren to every personal and eminent leaders of Bengal … “have you seen God?”. The answer, given truthfully, for the young questioner, was always, in a negative effect. To the great teacher when the usual question was asked by Naren. “Sir, have you seen God?” The answer was given at once; “Yes I seen Him just as I see you here, one in a much intenser sense. God can be realized; one can see and talk to Him as I am doing with you.”
Ramakrishna Paramahamsa emphatically stated, "You see many stars in the sky at night but not when the sun rises. Can you therefore say that there are no stars in the heaven during the day? O man, because you cannot find God in the days of your ignorance say not that there is no God". (55) This reminds us of Jesus who defines the first commandment thus: "Here, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength". (56)

The Scientific teacher asserts that all things are the creation of one force. This is quite similar to the most ancient Upanishad saying, "Whatever exists in this universe is to be covered with the Lord". Vivekananda has explained this saying as, "We have to cover everything with the Lord Himself, not by a false sort of optimism, not by blinding our eyes to the evil, but by really seeing God in everything". (57) In this context we can refer to Sankaracharya. He said: Perception is the last proof of existence. It is self-effulgent and self-conscious, because to go beyond the senses we should still need perception. Perception is independent of the senses, of all instruments unconditioned. There can be no perception without consciousness; perception has self-luminosity, which in a lesser degree is called consciousness. Existence and perception are one. It is eternal. It is always subjective; perception itself is its own perceiver. Perception is not in the mind, but perception brings mind. (58)

When the scriptures say that God is everything it means that God is interpenetrating everything. It is not that God has become the wall, but that God is in the wall. There is not a particle, not an atom in the universe, where he is not. Souls are all limited. They are not omnipresent. When they get expansion of their powers and become perfect, there is no more birth and death for them. They live with God for ever. According to Romain Rolland, Vivekananda was the enemy of all so-called “established religion” (of what he calls “congregational” religion) .... the religion of a church. “Let the Churches preach doctrines, theories, philosophies to their heart’s content”. All these are unimportant. But no church has the right to interfere with real religion, with “higher religion”, with the religion of action called prayer, with “adoration”, the real contact of the soul with God. These things are matters between the soul and God. “When it comes to worship, the real practical part of religion, it should be as Jesus says, “When thou
prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, prayer to thy Father which is in secret”. (59)

The Upanishad says, Magridah, ‘Covet not’. For coveting diverts attention from the infinite value of our personality to the temptation of materials. A similar view is also found in the opinion of Ramakrishna. To him, “Absolute continence must be practised, if God is to be realised .......... Renunciation of Kamini – Kanchana is essential”.

Radhakrishnan’s view is also akin to such a view of renunciation in releasing God. He observes that the process of vital realization of God is not a comfortable one for those who feel delight in the flesh and love of visible things. ‘Nature which are marred by self – conceit and self – will find it extremely hard to tread the path to the mountain top’.

All must be surrendered. Annihilation is the condition of abundance, death of life. Vivekananda also has asserted a similar view while talking to one of his brother disciple. In his words thus, “We do not have faith in God so long as we are assailed by egotism and desire. Some sort of desire always persists”. On the same occasion he quoted the words of his Master, who used to say, “Faith is the one essential thing : God is very near to us. You only require faith to realise this”. (62)

According to Vivekananda the apparent contradictions in every religion shows the stages of growth in religious process. The end of all religions is the releasing of God in the soul. (63) Once talking on the Vedanta Philosophy, he said, Oneness is the Unity of all.

‘And so the final essence of things is this Unity. What we see as many ...... as gold, love, sorrow, the world ...... is really God ...... We see many, yet there is but One Existence. These names differ only in the degrees of their expression. The matter of today is the spirit of the future. The worm of today ...... the God of tomorrow. These distinctions which we so love are all parts of One Infinite fact and that one Infinite fact is the attainment of Freedom’. (64)

It is only ignorance that makes the difference between the highest man and the lowest worm. The worm has only unmanifested the infinite power, knowledge and purity ...... the infinite divinity of God Himself. It will have to be manifested. (65) This is the view of Vivekananda. Every man is separated from women. But as human beings we are all one. We are also separated from animals but as living being we are one. This existence is God, the ultimate unity in this universe. In Him we are all one.
Radhakrishnan's construction of a universal spirit in Religion comes very near to Vivekananda. Radhakrishan opines that when religion succeeds in making us spiritual our conflicts are resolved. In the process we find ourselves in the great current of life. We belong no longer to any particular group, but to humanity as a whole. We respect the diversity as unity is the underlying principle. To this view he writes, "He is aware of the central drive of the universe. It drives through him and he has a vision of what it is driving at, the transformation of the undwelling of God into a conscious fact, of the possibility or hope of God for every man into a realisation". (66)

Nirvedananda's observation in this reference is akin to Radhakrishnan. He too opines, "We have to realise God, for then alone shall we be completely liberated. True, God is always within us and all about us. But so long as our minds are unclean, we cannot realize Him. So we have to cleanse our minds and that is about all we have to do till we reach the goal. This is our practical religion (dharma) our sadhana (spiritual endeavour)." (67)

If we are pure, we cannot see impurity. It may exist but never for a pure heart. We have to see only God in every man, woman and child. We can see God by the antarjyotis, 'inner light', and seeing that we can see nothing else. We must not want this world, because what we desire we get. We have to seek the Lord and the Lord only as opined by Vivekananda. The more power there is, the more bondage, the more fear there is. We are more afraid and miserable. We have to get out of it and come to get Lord Ingersoll once said to Vivekananda: "I believe in making the most out of this world. In squeezing the orange dry, because this world is all we are sure of." Vivekananda replied, "I know a better way to squeeze the orange of this world than you do, and I get more out of it. I know I cannot die, so I am not in a hurry; I know there is no fear, so I enjoy the squeezing. .... Everyone is God to me. Think of the joy of loving man as God! Squeeze your orange this way and get then thousandfold more out of it. Get every single drop, "God is within each one of us. Each one of us is born to re-discover one's own God nature.

We all have to begin as dualists in the religion of God. God is to us a separate Being. We feel ourselves to be separate beings also. Love then comes in the middle. Man then begins to approach God and God also comes nearer and nearer to man. Man takes up
all the various relationships of life and projects them as his ideal of love on God. When the blaze of light becomes perfect the little self becomes one with the Infinite. Man is transfigured in the presence of his ‘Light of Love’. He ultimately realises the beautiful and inspiring truth that Love, the Lover and the Beloved are one. Thus “Vedantism is an expansive ocean on the surface of which a man-of-war could be near a catamaran. So in the Vedantic ocean a real Yogi can be by the side of an idolater or even an atheist. What is more in the Vedantic ocean, the Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian, and Parsee are all one, all children of the Almighty God”. (69)

There is a triangle in love which can bring out the distinction between mere beggars and the real lovers of God. The Bhakta loves because he cannot help loving. This nature of real love is the first angle of our triangle. The second angle is that love knows no fear. The third angle is that love knows no rival, no fight. ‘True love never comes until the object of our love becomes to us our highest ideal’. (70) This is the opinion of Vivekananda’s Bhakti Yoga. He has also stated that Bhakti differs from the love of the Western idea of religion. In Bhakti there is no place for begging or bargaining with God. To Vivekananda, “The idea of asking God for anything is sacrilege to a Bhakta. He will not pray for health or wealth or even to go to heaven”. (71)

From a ‘Notes of Lectures’, ...... Delivered in Minneapolis on Nov. 26, 1893 this idea of Vivekananda was vividly expressed when he said in speaking of God, “Hypocrisy cannot exist where God is. You have your palaces for the worship of God. and you attend them in part for a time once a week, but how few go to worship God. Have you then, you people of the West, any right to lay exclusive claim to the possession of God ?” (72) When love of God grows and assumes a form which is called Para – Bhakti or supreme devotion then forms, rituals, books, images, temples, churches, sects, countries, nationalities ...... all these little limitations and bondage fall off by their own nature from him who acquires this love of God.(73)

Bhakti or worship or love according to Vivekananda in some form is the easiest, and most natural way of man. The natural state of this universe is attraction. This is followed by an ultimate disunion. The object of Bhakti is God. Love cannot be without a subject and an object. The object of love again must be at first a being who can reciprocate our love. So the God of love must be in some sense a human God. He must
be a God of love. He also upholds that form and ceremonies have their own value in this practical world. External practices have value only as helps to develop internal purity. We must not therefore decry the rituals and mythologies. He thus observes, Do not exhibit that unworthy derisive smile and say, “They are fools; let them have it”. Not so, the greatest men I have seen in my life, the most wonderfully developed in spirituality, have all come through the discipline of these rituals.\(^{74}\)

The Hindus, Vivekananda said, worship the same God as the Christians. The Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, Siva is merely an embodiment of God the creator, the preserver and the destroyer. We consider the three as separate because the general humanity must have its ethics made possible. So the material images of Hindu Gods are simply symbols of divine qualities. Hindus, do not lay much stress upon forms. The Hindus, says Vivekananda, ‘hold that there is good in all religions, that all religions are embodiments of man’s inspiration for holiness, and being such all should be respected’.\(^{75}\)

Ramakrishna’s mystic insight also sheds light on the reality of the spirit in all religions. The quint-essence of his life into a sublime poem, has a message for this world. The message is: Beneath all the plurality of faiths lives one basic truth; one essential taste, and one flavour ...... that of Love which, besides binding man to God, also binds man to man.\(^{76}\) Romain Rolland also writes in his book about Vivekananda’s, The one that made the deepest impression was the famous phrase: “Daridra – Narayana” (the beggar God) ...... “The only God that exists, the only God in whom I believe ...... my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races”. It may justly be said that India’s destiny was changed by him, and that this teaching re-echoed throughout Humanity. The striking words have been taken up again by Gandhi and are constantly used by him. “He surrounded service with a divine aureole and raised it to the dignity of a religion”.\(^{77}\) Essentially it is Vedanta conception which Vivekananda preached all throughout his life. As he emphatically stated, ‘We can have no conception of God higher than man. So our God is man and man is God’.\(^{78}\) Tagore too also opines, “Let us seek the religion of this and other people not in their gods but in Man, who dreamed of his own infinity and majestically worked from all time, defying danger and death”.\(^{79}\)
3.4 Vivekananda’s Concept of Spirit

*Reading the Vedas, making offering to priests or sacrifices to the gods, self-mortification by heat or cold, and many such penances performed for the sake of immortality, these do not cleanse the man who is not free from delusions .... the middle path, keeps aloof from extremes.*

Gautama Buddha

Throughout human history religion aspires for the knowledge of the ‘Spirit’ because such knowledge is vital and pervasive characteristic of human existence. If *Religion is spiritual realisation then the triumph of the spirit over matter is bound to be. Otherwise the question often arises is spirit and matter antagonistic to each other or the difference lies only in the degree of manifestation of the ‘Real’. To such a view the Oriental thinkers always offer arguments supporting the second view. Again the nations of the world either make a compromise with matter or spirit. Here the question arises which will survive, matter or spirit? In reply to this question the Oriental philosophers support that the spirit will triumph in the long run. Senses are within the material world. Sorrows and sufferings are related within the material world of maya. Beyond that every existence is good, pure and gentle. When we see the spirit itself we see no matter because matter is the very thing that is spirit. Vivekananda too like the Indian thinkers agrees that spirit is the fundamental reality of existence. It includes everything and excludes nothing. ‘...... Giving up the sense makes a nation survive’.

Vivekananda opines that spirit is more stronger than matter. For him the spirit theory explains the universe, Materialism does not. The Materialistic explanation is illogical. He observes that nobody has ever seen what matter is. We can only feel ourselves. Man cannot feel matter outside of himself. Nobody was ever able to jump outside of himself. Monism and dualism are thus essentially the same. It is only in the expression the difference lies. For the dualist, Father and son are two while for the monist they are just one. Dualism is in nature while monism is in pure spirituality, in the essence. (81) In the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo we find that an integral knowledge must be a knowledge of the truth from all sides of existence. 
This knowledge must be understood both separately as well as in relation of each to all. The relation of all our knowledge must exist to the truth of the Spirit. ‘Self-realisation is the one thing needful’, says Aurobindo too, ‘to open to the inner Spirit, to live in the Infinite, to seek after and discover the Eternal, to be in union with God’. (82) This is the aim of every religion which aspires for spiritual salvation. This is the dynamic achievement in one’s life who tries to seek the real beyond every sensual limitations.

Radhakrishnan has opined that the idealist philosophers have accepted the supremacy of spirit in man. The essential dignity of man is the spiritual status. This is the origin of his freedom. Man is often found dissatisfied with his empirical surroundings. He is aware of his dependence and limitations. Man is always eager for something higher and better which reveals the presence of spirituality in him. In this context Radhakrishnan writes, “It is because the universal spirit which is higher than the self-conscious individual is present and operative in self-conscious mind that the latter is dis-satisfied with any finite form it may assume”. (82) Hence Radhakrishnan has expressed that the Hindus have never doubted the reality of the one ‘Universal Spirit’, however much the descriptions of it may fall short of its nature. (85) The impact of this expression also emerges in the thought of Jawaharlal Nehru which is mingled with the idea of spirituality. He said, ‘I am not wedded to any dogma or religion but I do believe …… whether one calls a religion or not …… in the innate spirituality of human beings’. (85)

Vivekananda, in his philosophy unifies every differences between matter, mind and spirit. To him there is really no difference between matter, mind and spirit. They are only different phases of experiencing the One. This very world is seen by the five senses as matter. Actually we are all moving towards a unity. The grossest as well as the finest i.e. the material and the spiritual are all tending towards this one ideal of unity. Religion, says Vivekananda, is the realisation of Spirit as Spirit and not Spirit as matter. One who is spiritual sees Spirit as Spirit, not as matter. (86) This is Spirit which moves nature. It is the reality in nature. Even action is in nature and not in the Spirit. Spirit is always the same, changeless, eternal. Though Spirit and matter are in reality the same yet Spirit can never become matter. Moreover matter also cannot become Spirit.

Radhakrishnan’s view comes very near to Vivekananda’s philosophy in this respect. For Radhakrishnan also the spirit is the aim of nature. It is the principle of human responsibilities.
The soul is the form of the body, the City of God. While Brahma-loka is the form the goal of this universe. Man while achieving perfection faces obstacle not due to the body but 'the spirit inciting to evil'. The body is the house of God, devalya, a "tabernacle of the holy Spirit". The indwelling Spirit is related to the infinite and eternal life. It never had a beginning and it will never have an end. To such a view there is a distinction between Christian religion and the Vedic. The Christian religion teaches that each human soul had its beginning at its birth into this world. The Vedic religion on the other hand asserts that the spirit of man is an emanation of the Eternal Being. Like God, it is eternal and ever-pervading. Every change will cease to exist when every manifestation will reach perfection due to Spiritual Evolution.

This is the view of Vivekananda as expressed in his lecture on 'Vedanta'. Here he says that the Spirit is the cause of all our thought and body action and everything, but it is untouched by good or evil, pleasure or pain, heat or cold, and all the dualism of nature, although it lends its light to everything.

This view of Vivekananda reminds us of the Sankhya philosophy. It upholds that the whole of nature is for the soul but the soul is not for nature. Nature has no other meaning than the expression of the soul, through which, the soul attains freedom. Nature is of no use when we gain the required knowledge. Instead of breaking our identification with nature, we think that the soul is for nature the spirit is for the flesh. The common saying thus goes: man, 'lives to eat' and not 'eats to live'. To Vivekananda, "We are continually making this mistake, we are regarding nature as ourselves and are becoming attached to it; and as soon as this attachment comes, there is the deep impression on the soul, which binds us down and makes us work not from freedom but like slaves".

Tapasyananda writes in the article, "Freedom in life". As a Vedantist sees it, Real Freedom, therefore, belongs only to God, the Universal Spirit, who forms the spiritual background. Man so long as he experiences himself as an ego or soul, shares but of that freedom, but wrongly thinks that he, as an individual, is free, forgetting that real freedom belongs to the Supreme Spirit only. This attitude of freedom finds expression in the saying of Ramakrishna too. 'Just try to find out who this “I” is. While you are searching for “I” “He” comes out, “I am the machine and He is the Operator”. You have heard of mechanical toy that goes into a store with a letter in hand. You are like that toy. God alone is the Doer. Do your duties in the world as if you were the doer, but knowing all the time that God alone is the Doer and you are the
Different philosophers agree that the Atman has neither form nor shape. So it must be omnipresent. Time and space are in mind. Causation cannot stand without time. The Atman is beyond mind so it transcends time, space and cause. Consequently this Atman is infinite. There cannot be two infinite ....... this is the highest speculation in Indian Philosophy. If the soul is infinite then there can be only one Soul. all ideas of various souls are not real. The Real Man which is beyond space, time, cause and effect is one infinite and the omnipresent Spirit. Consequently the Real Man is free. The apparent man is only a limitation of that Real Man. The apparent man being always limited by space, time and causation is always bound. Tagore writes in the book ‘Religion of Man’

Ekadhaivanudrashtavyam etat aprameyam dhruvama

‘This infinite and eternal has to be known as One’. (92)

‘..... This is the divine being, the world-worker, who is the Great Soul ever dwelling inherent in the hearts of all people’.

He is also of the opinion that the vision of the Supreme man is realised by our imagination. It cannot be created by our mind. The ‘Supreme Man’ is more real than the individual men. Being more real than individual men, he surpasses each of us due to his transcendental personality. Religion is possible, Tagore says, only when we consciously co-operate with him through renunciation. Through our love for him we are made conscious of a great love that radiates from his beings, who is Mahatma, the Supreme Spirit. In this context Tagore’s view is very much close to Vivekananda. For Vivekananda also the stepping – stone and the real centre ....... the real heart of all spiritual culture is renunciation. To express this view of Vivekananda, ‘The Raja - yogi learns the lesson of renunciation through his own experience of nature. The Jnana-yogi has the hardest of all renunciations to go through, as he has to realise from the very first that the whole of this solid – looking nature is all an illusion .... He lets nature and all that belongs to her go, he lets them vanish and tries to stand alone’.

Vivekananda asserts that imparting spiritual knowledge is the highest help to mankind. It is spiritual knowledge that can destroy our miseries. Other knowledge satisfies wants only. It is the knowledge of the spirit that the faculty of want is annihilated for ever. He observes that unless there is spiritual strength in man, physical needs cannot be well satisfied. As Vivekananda used to say, “The more I live, the more I become convinced every day that
every human being is divine ...... The highest things are under your feet, because you are
divine stars. You can swallow the stars by the handful if you want ; such is your real nature. Be
strong, get beyond all superstitions, and be free”. (94) It is only when tamas prevail, the mind
gets dull and inert, the spirit is brought down to the level of matter.

The Vedanta teaches to every man : “Thou art one with this Universal Being”. (93)
Every other soul and body are just identical with mine. Hence in hurting anyone, I hurt myself,
in loving anyone, I love myself. As soon as a current of hatred is thrown outside, whomsoever
else it hurts, it also hurts me. If love comes out from any one else, it is bound to come back to
me. For I am the universe This universe is my body. I am the Infinite, only I am not conscious
of it now. But every moment I am struggling to get this consciousness of the Infinite. Perfection
will be reached when fully consciousness of this Infinite comes. Here every differences
between me and every other existence cease. This is the corner stone of Hinduism. Being a
Advaitin, Vivekananda revolutionised the classical vedanta teaching through the gospel of
‘Practical Vedanta’. The quint – essence of the teachings of the Upanishads is strength ; “Abhii”,
fearless. Physical, mental and spiritual freedom are the watch words of the Upanishads. It is
only in Spirit that we are all one. When we see God everywhere then unity of oneness pre
vails. The Gita thus proclaims :

“Where the whole world is awake, the sage sleep. But where the ignorant are asleep,
there the sage keep awake”. (96) For Vivekananda, Religion is a growth. Spiritual worship
does not become materialised because we are bounded by our senses. Majority of mankind
are never seen to worship spirit as spirit. It is not yet possible. Very few can worship God as
Spirit. Only who is Spirit can feel nothing but spirit. (97) Worshipping God as Spirit was found
in the life of Ramakrishna. In this context we can refer to Romain Rolland’s view regarding
the ‘Great Master’ as he writes, “...... As be believes that his Lord is in everything, in all
forms, he soon begins to perceive other forms of Gods emanating from his own Beloved
....... Eventually he is so filled with its music that there is no room in him for anything else,
and the material world disappears. This is called Savikalpa Samadhi ... But when one idea
has taken possession of the soul, all other ideas fade and die away, and his soul is very near its final end, the Nirvikalpa Samadhi ...... the final union with Brahman. It is not far to that cessation of thought wherein at last absolute Unity is realised by complete renunciation" .

Vivekananda agrees that Formal worship is also necessary. This is also a spark of the Truth. It is only when one gets the glimpse of that spirit, every enjoyment of the senses, clinging to the flesh become meaningless. It is only then one will finish Yoga and Spirit will be revealed as spirit. Then only man begins to worship God as Spirit. To realise the spirit as spirit is 'Practical Religion'. (99) Everything else is good so far as it leads to this one grand idea. This realisation is attained by meditation. Meditation consists in this practice of dissolving everything into the 'Ultimate Reality' .... Spirit.

Thus in his reply to the Madras Address declares in a triumphant voice: Let us take our stand on the one central truth in our religion ...... The Spirit in man, the Atman of man, the immortal, birthless, all pervading eternal Soul of man, whose glories the Vedas cannot themselves express, .... Every man or woman, nay, from the highest Devas to the worm that crawls under your feel, is such a spirit involved or involved. The difference is not in kind but only in degree. The infinite form of the Spirit, brought to bear upon matter, evolves material development ; made to act upon thought, evolves intellectuality ; and made to act upon itself, makes a man a God. (100)

This view of Vivekananda once again echoes the spiritual principle of his master'

"Be spiritual and realise truth for yourself". (101)

In this context we can refer to the significant remarks of Radhakrishnan. He conceives that Hinduism has no fixed creed by which it may be said to stand or fall. It can be convinced that the spirit will outgrow the creed. Hinduism recognises that the endless variety of the visible and the temporal world is sustained by the invisible and eternal Spirit. It is because there is no dualism between the natural and the supernatural. “Let us believe in a unity of spirit and not of organization, a unity which secures ample liberty not only for every individual but for every type of organized life which has proved itself effective”. (102)
3.5 Vivekananda’s Concept of Self

\textit{Antar mamo Bikashita karo}
\textit{Antaratar hae}
\textit{Nirmal Karo, Ujjal Karo}
\textit{Sundar Karo hae}

‘Develop my inner self, make me pure, bright and beautiful’.

Gitanjali.

The religious and scientific statements, ordinarily speaking, seems directly opposed to each other. But if we take an infinite series, A-B-A-B-A-B \ldots\ the question arises which is first A or B. If the series starts with A, B follows. If the series again starts with B, A follows. The Sankhyas and other religions put intelligence first, so matter follows. While the scientific man puts matter first, so intelligence follows. In this content Vivekananda observes that Indian philosophy goes beyond both intelligence and matter. It finds ‘Purusha’ or Self, which is beyond intelligence, ‘of which intelligence is but the borrowed light’. (103)

According to the Indian system of thinking, there are two existences viz. Nature and the Self or the Atman. Nature embraces not only external world but our bodies, the mind, the will, even to say the saying ‘I’. The self, the Atman \ldots\ the infinite life, is beyond nature. The self is entirely separated from nature. It can never be identified with the mind. The Sanskrit word for the Self is Atman, which is derived from the root at, means “to go always to evolve always”. (104) The Atman or the Self thus means that which evolves always.

To Vivekananda Atman and soul for Occident, are entirely different things. Our Manas, the mind constitute the soul for the West. The West never had the idea of soul. The body is here, beyond that is the mind. But the mind is not the Atman. It is the sukshma sharira, made of fine particles which goes from birth to death, and so on. But behind the mind is the Atman, the soul, the self of man. It cannot be translated by the word soul or mind so we have to use the word Atman, or as western philosophers have designated it, by the word self. (105) They have failed to establish the existence of the Self.
apart from objective consciousness. Consequently they have failed to come to a final conclusion regarding the ultimate Truth.

There is one all-comprehending existence. This one appears as manifold. This Self or Soul or Substance is all that exists in the universe. Non-dualism holds that this Self or Substance or Soul is Brahman. Brahman appears as many because of the interposition of name and form. There is one Atman, ... the unchanged. The various changes in the universe are but appearances in that one Self.

It is a delusion to think of one's limitation. The Self of man is not a compound. The domain of compounds is possible only within our mental universe. The self of man is beyond causation. It is ever free and is the Ruler of everything that is within law. It is sheer nonsense to say It dies. Vivekananda observed that the self, the Atman ... is by its own nature pure. The one Existence of universe is reflecting itself from the lowest to the most perfect thing. The whole of this universe ... physically, mentally, morally and spiritually is one Unity — one Existence. This self is eternal and all pervading. Closely connected to this view we have the Upanisadic analysis of the Self

Shankaracharya holds that everyone is conscious of the existence of his own self, 'I' and no one thinks "I am not".

Sarvo hy atmastitvam pratyetic na
naham asmiti. (S. B. , 1.1.1.)

This self is prior to the stream of consciousness, truth and falsehood, reality and illusion and good and evil.

Ya eva hi nirakarta tad eva tasya Svarupam. (S.B.11.3.7)

Atman cannot be doubted, "for it is essential nature of him who denies it". Shankaracharya also brings out clearly the distinction between the absolute Self, the Divine Person, and the human individual. He comments thus,

'Therefore the unconditioned self, being beyond speech and mind, undifferentiated and one, is designated as "not this, not this" , when it has the limiting adjuncts of the body and organs .......... it is called the empirical individual self; and when the self has the limitation of the creative power manifesting through eternal and unlimited knowledge it is called the inner ruler and divine person. The same self, as by its nature transcendent absolute, and pure, is called the immutable and supreme self". (108)
For Vivekananda, all pleasures of the senses are associated with pain. But there is within ourselves one true unrelated pleasure which is dependent on nothing outside. This is the pleasure of the Self which the world calls as religion. The more our bliss is within, the more spiritual we are: So let us not depend on the world for pleasure. Materialism says that the voice of freedom is a delusion. Idealism again says that the voice that tells of bondage is but a dream. But Vedanta says that we are free and not free at the same time. (109) This means, says Vivekananda that we are never free on the earthy plane. We are but free on the spiritual side. The self is beyond both freedom and bondage. We are Brahman. We are immortal knowledge beyond the senses. We are Bliss Absolute.

Radhakrishnan shares with Vivekananda, his belief regarding the nature of the 'Self', which is spiritual. He asserts that when the self gets free from the clutches of all outward events, there arises an experience from the inward depths ...... secret, wonderful, strange and great. Just as Brahman is real in relation to the universe, so the individual egos are the various expressions of the One Universal Self. Here Radhakrishnan makes the significant remark: ‘As Brahman is the eternal quiet underneath the drive and activity of the universe, so atman is the foundational reality underlying the conscious powers of the individual, the inward ground of the human soul. There is an ultimate depth to our life below the plane of thinking and striving. The atman is the super-reality of the jiva, the individual ego.’

Sri Aurobindo’s, spiritual interpretation of the Self also enabled him to see the ‘Being’ as a living spiritual Truth an Entity, a Power which can be acquired by all according to their degree of capacity. This Truth must become the very foundation of our life and action. To quote him, ‘The Infinite alone justifies the existence of the finite and the finite by itself has no entirely separate value or independent existence. Life, if it is not an illusion, is a divine Play, a manifestation of the glory of the Infinite.’ (110) So the Self-existent Being is the one Supreme reality. Everything, are only appearances, but are true due to its dependence upon it. Every actions of man are the means of progress towards self – realization and God realization being the fundamental activity of human beings.

In this context we can refer to Vivekananda’s view. He also remarked that the self-existent One projects the senses outward. So a man looks outward and not within
himself. Only certain wise one, desiring immortality, with inverted senses, perceive the Self within. The more we approach our real Self, the more the delusion vanishes. The more all differences and divisions disappear we realise all as the One Divinity. God exists, but He is not the man sitting upon a cloud, says Vivekananda. God is even nearer to our self. He is the soul. When we think of God as some one separate from our self, we do not know Him. God is my real Self. (112) This is the doctrine of the prophets of India.

The cause of all bondage is ignorance. Each man is Divine. Perfectly holy and pure knowledge can only remove all our misery. The essential knowledge, is our own nature ....... “Know thy – self”. (113) We must become conscious of that infinite nature within. There are also various ways to know this Self, but in Jnana Yoga it takes the help of nothing else but sheer intellectual reasoning.

Life is the awakening of the soul from its bondage. Evolution is the success in this struggle as it aims to attain freedom from the clutches of the senses. When slavery of the senses is overcome, salvation (freedom) is attained from ignorance. Every existence in this universe is the struggle for liberty because when we are within the grip of nature, we fail to grasp our real nature. But in this bondage too, the Self is not completely lost. In the process of evolution we ultimately become conscious of our innate real existence, that we are the infinite spirit, the master of nature and not its slave. .... ‘I am that I am’ The highest expression of religion is thus found in the Atman. This view of Vivekananda is expressed when he observed that Asti, “isness”, is the basis of all unity. Just as soon as the basis is found, perfection ensues. The perfect oneness is at rest. We refer all manifestations to one Being. Man must love others because those others are himself. There is but One existence. (114)

Tagore’s view is akin to Vivekananda regarding the real nature of man. “In the world which is the field of his ego, man boasts of his bulk, but in the world where his spirit dwells, his perfection is in greatness which cannot be measured by dimension. Beauty and excellence, heroism and sacrifice reveal the soul of man: they transcend the isolated man and realize the Universal Man who dwells in the inmost heart of all individual. (115)

The Sankhya philosophy asserts that nature is showing all the experiences to the
soul. When it gets real experience it knows its own nature. The Advaita Vedantists uphold that the soul is struggling to reveal itself and in its process find that the 'subject must always remain the subject'. (116) Then begins non-attachment and thus attains freedom. The scriptures say that the self cannot be reached by too much intellectual analysis and by the study of the scriptures and the Vedas. The Vedas teach that the Self is first to be heard, then to be thought upon and then meditated upon. It is our ideal and strength in our heart the self can be seen in every existence as the reflection of the eternal truth.

Vivekananda opines that the mind and body are not our real Self. Both belong to nature. When every projection of the mind and body being transcended there is a suspension of every relative knowledge. It is when we cease completely to know and see nature then only the truth of the Self can be realized. The Vedas themselves cannot give knowledge of the Self. Consequently the Self is beyond Maya. So it is beyond birth and death. It is eternal and unchangeable Reality. In us there are two souls. One is the God-soul and the other is the man-soul. The latter is only the shadow of the former. To Vivekananda, our Soul is the combination of the will, consciousness, senses, desires and passions. So there is first the apparent self (body) second the mental self, (which by mistake identifies itself with the body). The third is the pure Self, the Atman. Hence when partially seen the Atman appears as nature when seen wholly the nature goes off including memory. He who sees the whole can gets the parts too. Dualism is thus included in Advaitism. So says Vivekananda, “The stainless one sees the Self, and an eternal calm comes in the Soul”. (117)

‘Practical Religion’, is possible only when we identify ‘my self with the Self’. If that is not possible then we are dying a dog’s death. The dog howls and weep because he knows that he is only matter and is going to dissolve. In this context, Vivekananda quotes the words of his Master “It is all very good to teach the parrot to say, ‘Lord, Lord, Lord’ all the time; but let the cat come and take hold of its neck, it forgets all about it”. So says Vivekananda that all our prayers, regarding all the scriptures and worship of all the gods are meaningless unless we realise the Soul. (118) There is no freedom without the realization of the Self.

In the book ‘Talks with Swami Vivekananda’, we find that for Vivekananda external observances are necessary to remove the obstacles so that the shining nature of
the self can illuminate every darkness created by our ignorance. Liberation or samadhi consists in doing away with the obstacles to the manifestation of Brahman. Every human being have equal right for this realization. (119) Like Shankaracharya, Vivekananda too said that everybody will attain Mukti. Freedom is the soul's cry. Brahman is within every conscious and unconscious manifestation. "Be possessed of Shraddha (faith), of Virya (courage), attain to the knowledge of the Atman, and sacrifice your life for the good of others ....... this is my wish and blessings", said Vivekananda. (120)

There is no relative knowledge in this state. This Atman is the knower itself. It is not dependent on anything for its knowledge. The Atman is knowledge, the Atman is Intelligence, the Atman is Sachchidananda. It is through the inscrutable power of Maya, the relative consciousness has come upon the Jiva who is none other than Brahman. This is the conscious state. In the super conscious state the duality of relative existence becomes one in the pure Brahman. If the Atman is unchangeable, it must be perfect. If it is perfect, it must be infinite; and if it be infinite, it must be only One. So there cannot be two infinities. The Atman i.e. the Self is just One. To such a view of Vivekananda we can put that if the man, happens to go toward the sun, at every step he would see a different sun, and yet it will be the same sun after all. (121)

To Vivekananda man's inborn divine nature is an inner experience of life. 'Teach yourself, teach every one, his real nature; call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, everything great and glorious will come, when the sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity'. (122)

The theory of modern evolution, which is known as evolution and atomism, is exactly the same as Ramanuja's theory of contradiction and expansion as viewed by Vivekananda. Evolution of nature and manifestation of the self come from within, the watch word of the Advaita philosophy. The self can never by any means be made contract. Self is unchangeable, being infinite. The veil which covers the Self is Maya. As the Maya becomes thinner and thinner, natural glory of the soul comes out. This is the one great doctrine, which Vivekananda declares in a triumphant voice; 'the world is waiting to learn from India'. 'Evolution,' says Vivekananda, 'is' really the process of refinement of matter allowing the real self to manifest Itself. It is as if a screen or a veil were between
us and some other object. The object becomes clear as the screen is gradually withdrawn. The question is simply one of manifestation of the higher Self. \(^{(123)}\)

When we see the "rope" we do not see the "serpent". When the "serpent" is, the "rope" is not. We cannot see the both at the same time. So long we see the world we cannot see the Self. In the realization of 'Brahman', the personal "I" with all knowledge of the world is lost. The God of our worship is really only the self which we have separated from ourselves. As Vivekananda said, "Let us be Gods, let us make our hearts like an ocean, to go beyond all the trifles of the world and see it only as a picture". \(^{(124)}\)

This reminds us of Shankaracharya’s view regarding the Upanishadic teaching which proclaims that there exists only one universal being called Brahman or Paramatman, the highest self. This being is of an absolute homogeneous nature. It is pure ‘Being’, pure intelligence. Intelligence cannot be predicated of Brahman as its attribute, but constitutes its substance. Brahman being associated with the principle of illusion; Maya or Avidya, is enable to project the appearance of the world. Brahman is like a magician who with his magical power can produce the illusory appearances of animate and inanimate beings.

In an epistle, to Shashi, 1895, Vivekananda writes: I am a Vedantist. Sachchidananda ...... Existence ...... Knowledge Bliss Absolute ...... is my God. I scarcely find any God than the majestic form of my own Self. When the consciousness rises higher every limitations then the Reality behind the limited consciousness reveals itself. We see then the Reality as the One Existence – Knowledge – Bliss, the One Atman, the Universal.

This view of Vivekananda comes very near to Tagore. The great soul who is within me, who is beyond age and death and sorrow, beyond hunger and thirst, He who is true in thought and in action, Him we must seek, He we must know. .......

This seeking and knowing him, Tagore observes, ‘is not seeking and knowing outside oneself. It is knowing through becoming, receiving through being true within’. \(^{(125)}\) This reminds us of Sridhar Majumdar’s view in his writing, “Where we are One” He writes thus, ‘......... the Self is the only Eternal Reality, the Common Repository of us all, where we are one. It is the infinite ocean of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute, upon which is the eternal play of the wavelets of individuals. It is the water that is the only reality both in the ocean and in the wavelets; even so is the Self that is the only
Existence both at the back of the world – evolution and in the evolutes. We are thus all one in the Self, both absolute and relatively’. (126) Hence let us proclaim to every soul: Arise, arise, awake! Awake from this infinite, omnipotent and omniscient, stand up assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do you deny Him. (127)

3.6 Vivekananda’s Concept of Practical – Vedanta

All admit the truth that the power is there ...... potential or manifest it is there ...... and the sooner you believe that, the better for you. All power is within you;
you can do anything and everything. Believe in that, do not believe that you are weak;
do not believe that you are half-crazy lunatics, as most of us do now-a-days.

You can do anything and everything without even the guidance of any one.

All power is there. Stand up and express the divinity within you

Vivekananda.

In India Philosophy and Religion are inter-related. They are not mere theoretic and speculative temperament of the thinking mind. Philosophy means ‘clear vision’ of the essential truth of existence and religion is ‘practical philosophy’. Since the Upanishads proclaim ‘He who shines through the eyes is Brahman; He is the Beautiful One, He is the Shining One He shines in all these worlds’. (128) The theme of the Vedanta is also to see the Lord in everything, to see things in their real nature. It teaches as not to see things as they appear to be. This is the sublime truth of Indian Philosophy. Even M. Hiriyanna observes that Indian philosophy aims beyond logic. Philosophy in India did not take its rise in wonder or curiosity as it seems to have done in the West. Philosophy has developed under the pressure of a practical need, from the presence of physical evils in life. Philosophic endeavor was directed primarily to find a remedy from the ills of life. It is rather gradually that the consideration of metaphysical questions came into force. (129)

For Vivekananda, Vedanta is more practical than any branch of science. Vedanta, as he believed, must be free from the life – less scholastic analysis and to liberate it from the shell of academism into which it was imprisoned for centuries. The abstract Advaita must become
living poetic in everyday life. Out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms. Again out of bewildering yogism must come the most scientific and practical psychology. He insists that potentially each of us has the infinite ocean of Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss as our birthright, our real nature. The difference between us is caused by the greater or lesser power to manifest that divine. It is the Vedantic philosophy which teaches us that each man stands for the divine and every teacher should be helpful, not by condemning but by helping him to call forth the divinity that is within. This is the clarion call of Vivekananda for every human being.

For Vivekananda there is no need for any dispute between the transcendent state of spiritual awareness and the knowledge of material reality. This material reality is described in Vedantic thought as avidya (ignorance). This is the real and practical side of Vedanta. It does not destroy the world, but explains it. This never destroys the person, but explains it by showing the real individuality. It does not show that this world is vain and does not exists, but it says, 'Understand what this world is, so that it may not hurt you'. This reminds us of Romain Rolland’s view of Vivekananda. He writes, “Vedantic Advaitism (that is to say impersonal and absolute Monism), of which he is the greatest modern representative declares that Maya cannot be defined as non-existence any more than it can be defined as existence. It is an inter mediate form between the equally absolute Being and non-Being. Hence it is the Relative”. For Gandhi also love for all finds expression in truth and Ahimsa. Non-violence is the basis of Gandhian comprehensive philosophy. He desired for the future India which is both economically as well as spiritually happy. Religion for him is real participation in every activities of life. It is 'work' which can improve the conditions of human existence. Gandhi thus said, “To see the universal and all pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself ……… that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means”.

While reconciling science and Advaita Vedanta, by pointing out the fundamental principles of knowledge common to the both, Vivekananda says, it takes nothing away. He has only enhanced everything. ‘Advaita ……… the non-duality, the Oneness, the idea of the Impersonal God, is the only religion that can have any hold on any intellectual people. This view of Vivekananda is just the same as Albert Einstein’s observation. For Albert Einstein,
The most important upshot of the special theory of relativity concerned the inert masses of corporeal systems. It turned out that the inertia of a system necessarily depends on its energy content, and this led straight to the motion that inert mass is simply latent energy. The principle of the conservation of mass lost its independence and became fused with that of the conservation of energy. (136)

The impersonal religion of Vivekananda is identical with strength and selfless activity. His mission was to awaken the lost individuality among the Indian masses which lies in the inherent eternal spirituality. The sight of the country's misery and the thought of its future did not let him remain quiet any more. Every Samadhi, metaphysical explanations of life, all have appeared futile to him. His vow of life is to think of their welfare. The mass poverty and ignorance of the Indian people seared his heart and instigated Vivekananda to make Vedanta practical. This inner feeling of selfless love has found expression in his fundamental teachings. The zeal of practicing the essence of Vedanta teaching made Vivekananda to declare, as Nikhilananda quotes from 'The Future of India'. "For the next fifty years let all other vain Gods disappear from our minds. This is the only God that is awake: our own race... All other Gods are sleeping. Why should we vainly go after them, when we can worship the God that we see all around us, the Virat?... These are all our God...... men and animals; and the first Gods we have to worship are our own countrymen". (137)

Vivekananda has tried to revolutionise the whole Indian society. He favoured the material conquests of the Anglo Saxon as it helped the human race. The spread of the English power opened the paths across the sea. This 'new opening', as he has observed, will help in the spread of spirit of India. To this Nikhilananda holds: Vivekananda asked the Indians to stop complaining. Let them make use of the power that lay in their hands. That power was so great that if they only realized it and were worthy of it, they could revolutionize the world. India was the Ganga of spirituality'. (138)

It is Lord Buddha, says Vivekananda, who has brought the ancient religious principles down to the practical field. Buddha is the living embodiment of Vedanta as he has showed us the application of the religious principles in the everyday life of the people, which otherwise was enclosed within the hands of a few. Addressing a London audience on 'The Absolute and Manifestation' in 1896, Vivekananda said: 'By Buddha the moral side of the philosophy was laid stress upon and by Sankaracharya the intellectual side. He worked out, rationalized, and
placed before men the wonderful system of Advaita’. (139)

Marie Louise Burke opines that the practical monism of Vivekananda’s view is the most essential to the modern world. Vivekananda never rejects the world as unreal and worthless rather demanded the renunciation of the false and narrow vision. The very idea of God is love. When we see a cat loving her kittens it reflects the selfless love. God becomes manifest there through such selfless love. Only repeating ‘I am Thine, I am Thine’, we can see God everywhere. Mere talk on Him is just nothing. We have to see Him in every existence. This view of Burke is expressed through Vivekananda’s feeling that perceiving of many is the great sin of the world. Self is the eternal truth and all have to be loved. Let all our knowledge of separateness must vanish. (140)

*The philosophy of Vivekananda is closely linked up with his guru, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa,* whose religious enthusiasm inspired him to preach the ‘Practical Vedanta’. Ramakrishna once admonished Vivekananda to commune with God with eyes open, i.e. through service of the poor, the sick, the hungry and the ignorant. While wandering as a monk (parivrajaka) Vivekananda has seen with his own eye the real picture of India. He felt the voiceless appeal of India for his help. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa used to say that many with a show of humility say, ‘I am like a low worm grovelling in the dust’. To think always as worms, it makes them weak in spirit like worms. “The mind is everything. If the mind loses its liberty, you lose yours. If the mind is free, you are free too” (141). This gospel of the Master has the spirit of awakening the poor, the lowly and the depressed, to fight with the growing cruelty and exploitation.

It is at Kanya – Kumari that the mission, which Vivekananda has undertaken long ago, suddenly flashed his eyes. In the letter of March 19, 1894, to Ramakrishnanda, written from Chicago, one can catch the spirit of Vivekananda’s meditation on the rock:

In view of all this, specially of the poverty and ignorance, I got no sleep. At Cape Comorin, sitting in Mother Kumari’s temple sitting.......... I hit upon a plan: We are so many sannyasis wandering about, and teaching the people metaphysics ....... it is all madness. Did not our Master use to say, “An empty stomach is no good for religion?” That those poor people are leading the life of brutes, is simply due to ignorance. We have for all ages been sucking their blood and trampling them underfoot. (142)
In this moment of Vivekananda's life the only motto that has touched him, is of India.

particularly the service of her outcast, starving 'millions of oppressed Narayanas'. Even direct experience of Brahman in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi for him, has become subservient. His soul was caught up in the vision of Narayana Himself, the Lord of the Universe, transcendent. It is immanent in all beings ....... whose boundless love makes no distinction between high and low, pure and vile, rich and poor. Vivekananda has become the culmination of a patriot and prophet in one ! (143) It is this feeling of nationalism, which has made him to feel that religion is no more the need for people of India. It is training in the practical things of life that will enable them to cope with the English who have occupied India. He writes thus, “Him I call a man whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a durat man”. (144) Vivekananda thus, sets this flaming passion for service and power of synthesis from his master, Nikhilananda has opined that this zeal of practicing Vedanta became the burning principle not only for himself but also for other brother monks. Vivekananda declared in a triumphant voice that personal liberation is unworthy of those who called themselves the disciples of Ramakrishna ....... an Incarnation of God. With the grace of a Saviour they must be convinced of their own salvation. So their duty, he emphasized, is to serve others as the visible manifestations of God. This new band of monks will not be guided by the traditional now of personal salvation. They will be guided with a new vow ....... a vision of service to humanity. (145) In close connection to such a view Tapas Chandra Sankar Dutta very aptly remarks that Vivekananda’s application of universalism is the cornerstone of his practical life. As to quote him, “Swamiji not only felt and talked of universalism, he applied the doctrine of universalism, in practice as well. The flow of his spontaneous love did not stand in the way of his belonging to a religion” (146)

Haripada Mitra recollects in the ‘Reminiscences’, Vivekananda’s feeling of religious growth in society. Know it, said Vivekananda, that our knowledge of the external world is determined by the ideas that we entertain in our hearts. But no body realises the impact of such saying, ‘The world is good when I am good’. (147) In India there are hundred millions of Vedantins. But there are very few who have actually realised religion, otherwise the world would have enjoyed a tremendous change. Vivekananda proclaims thus, “We are all atheists, and yet we are all in the dark ; religion is to us a mere intellect assent, a mere talk, a mere nothing. We often consider a man religious who can talk well. But this is not religion"
There must be practical equality. We have to take the truth as it is. Even if we cannot reach to
it, we must not destroy the ideal.

Gandhi like Vivekananda has tried to assimilate all the best of different religions into
one unique principle of Non-violence. While doing so he only tried to remind the people of
the ancient virtues. He was never dogmatic in his views. Gandhi has not derived the religious
ideals from any religious scriptures. His life itself is the ‘Experiment with Truth’. To put in his
own words, “In the name of religion we Hindus have made a fetish of outward observances,
and have degraded religion by making it simply a question of eating and drinking ...”

We are the Self which is eternally at rest and at peace. There is no weeping for the soul
Such a God will not be worth attaining when we imagine that ‘God is weeping out of sympathy
on his throne. So “Seek the Highest”, says Vivekananda, “always the Highest, for in the
Highest is eternal bliss. If I am the hunt, I will hunt the lion. If I am to rob, I will rob the
treasury of the King. Seek the Highest”. (150)

Sri Ramakrishna’s practical idealism may also be expressed in the words of Jesus
who taught : Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall
be added unto you”. Also, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his
own soul ?”. (33) The great ideals of Jesus, Buddha and other Rishis manifest the idea that God
and man are not separated but are linked together through transcendental consciousness. We
also see that God becomes a ‘Living Reality’. Every moments of our life become God-
consciousness. When we are able to perceive this, then alone we are convinced of the eternal
value of Truth and God. Vivekananda, like Jesus is trying to seek God not in tapasaya but in
all beings —— the manifested forms of God. Unlike Shankaracharya, Vivekananda’s Advaita
Vedanta was freed from the ‘ego of knowledge’ in order to teach others (as the Vedas describe)
that Brahman is of the nature of Bliss —— It is Satchidananda. His practical Vedanta had
become possible only because he could bring down Brahman from the metaphysical aspect to
the physical aspect of our inner consciousness. Religion is the worship of the Spirit the
Atman. Thus the Brahman of Sankaracharaya which was placed at the top of the pyramid of
knowledge, Vivekananda, the Advaitin placed Brahman at the core of feelings for every
existence.

In this Vivekananda message, Nikhilananda opines, we find the sublime truth in
vividness of the seeker of Brahman .......... the Absolute. All men are sons of the same God
He who wishes to serve must serve man in the first instance, man in the humblest, poorest, most degraded form. Only by breaking down the barriers between man and man one can establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. (152) Social reform is necessary but not in words but in practice. Our talk on social reform does not touch the poor masses as they remain the same in spite of all the dreams and cries of our reformers. As widow remarriage, female emancipation, etc find no value in the life of the poor masses, so they are least bothered. It is the want of shraddha which has brought in all the evils among us. The method of treatment is not of suppression but to take out by the roots, the very causes of the diseases. Reforms have to be encouraged, but their value depends on their workable approach. “Reforms should have in many ways; who will be so foolish as to deny it?” (153)

‘Shraddha’ implies ‘to have faith in ourselves’. To Vivekananda we are lacking this quality both in our material and spiritual achievements. ‘Either put forth your energy in the way I have suggested and be successful in life or give up all and take to the path we have chosen. Serve the poor of all countries through spiritual instructions then only will you get your dole of food like us’. (154) Thus the west want every bit of spirituality through social improvement. The East want every bit of social power through spirituality. (155)

Vivekananda re-orient the general understanding of service. Every work that we do is subjective. We do it for our own benefit. There is no meaning of the word help. We cannot help others. It is just blasphemy. We actually worship. So ‘Do not stand on a high pedestal and take five cents in your hand and say, “Here, my poor man”, but be grateful that the poor man is there, so that by making a gift to him, you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed, but it is giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world, and thus become pure and perfect’. (156)

Tagore’s view of mutual help and sympathy amongst every individuals combined with his call for spiritual unity of all human beings after the discovery of his soul, precisely flourish the temperament of Vedantic spirit. His trumpet call for ‘Humanity’, which shows that our higher nature is actually the ‘constant strive’ for Practical Vedanta. As Tagore writes that each individual has his self-love. His brute instinct leads him to fight with others in the sole pursuit of his self-interest. But man has also his higher instincts of sympathy and mutual help. Those people who are lacking in this higher moral power must perish. Those who have the spirit of co-operation can only survive. “So we find that from the beginning of history men had to
choose between fighting with one another and combining, between surviving their own interest or the common interest of all". (157)

Radhakrishnan shares with Vivekananda in the basic ‘oneness of existence’. Radhakrishnan refers to the aim of religion not in reflection or ecstasy but identification with the current of life. Religion is the participation in its creative progress. He explicitly acknowledges that religious man transcends the limitations imposed on him by his material nature or social conditions. Religious man thus enlarges the creative purpose. ‘Religion is a dynamic purpose, a renewed effort of the creative impulse working through exceptional individuals, and seeking to uplift mankind to a new level’. (158) Vivekananda too opines that we need Rajasika energy for the whole country which is wrapped in the shroud of Tama. The needy and down trodden have to become active.

The Disciples of Vivekananda observes that in Vivekananda combines the meditative nature of a Hindu saint with the dash and energy of a Westerner. He is a militant yogi, a Brahmana and a Kshatriya, a monk and warrior, in one. He represents the personification of the present need in India ..... the Kshatriya force of the past. To this view Vivekananda proclaimed, ‘Can you become’, ‘Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work and energy and at the same time be a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts ? This is to be done and we will do it. You are born to do it’. (159)

From the deeps of his meditation comes thundering the voice:

Awake, arise, and dream no more

............. Be bold, and face

The Truth ! Be one with it ! Lest visions cease,

Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,

Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.  (160)
3.7 Distinction between God and Absolute in the thoughts of Vivekananda

*It is a difference between God as He is and God as he seems to us.*

*Personality is a symbol; and if we ignore its symbolic character it shuts us out from the truth.*

S. Radhakrishnan

Truth remains ever unchanged. But it can only be presented in a “form”. So from time to time a new ‘form’ or expression is given to Truth. The progress of mankind makes them ready to receive it. When we free ourselves from name and form, especially when we no longer need a body of any kind, good or bad, coarse or fine, then only we can escape from bondage.

When philosophers and theologians have tried to understanding this ‘Truth’ they have coined two different concepts accordingly. The Absolute of philosophy is conceived of as an Impersonal being (formless) while God of Religion is conceived of as a personal being (with form). To this, Vivekananda has clearly stated that the Impersonal God is a living God, a principle. The difference between personal and impersonal is that the personal is only a man and the impersonal idea is that He is the angel, the man, the animal. It is something more which we cannot see because impersonality includes all personalities. It is the sum total of everything in the universe, and infinitely more besides. “As the one fire coming into the world is manifesting itself in so many forms, and yet is infinitely more besides”, (161) so is the Impersonal.

The problem of the philosophers and theologians is how to reconcile both God and Absolute in a unity. Relevant in this context is the observation of Radhakrishnan. As he says, “The great problem of the philosophy of religion has been the reconciliation of the character of the Absolute as in a sense eternally complete with the character of God as a self – determining principle manifested in a temporal development which includes nature and man”. (162)

The Svetasvatara Upanisad describes God as mayin, the wonder working powerful Being, who creates the world by His powers (III.10). In the Rg Veda, maya is
understood as the ‘divine art or power by which the divinity makes a likeness of the eternal prototypes or ideas inherent in his nature’. The world arises from Maya the power Isvara. Isvara has made this world, ‘formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him a living soul’. Every existence contained in time ontologically present in creative eternity. The Supreme is transcendent as well as immanent. It is one, breathing breathless. It is both manifest and unmanifest, silent and articulate. It is the real and the unreal. (163)

According to Vivekananda God is the highest form of generalised law. With the knowledge of this law, all others can be explained, being sub-ordinate to it. ‘God is to religion what Newton’s law of gravity is to falling bodies’. (164) But he firmly asserts that to a more evolved minds this idea of a Personal God cannot be the last word about God. ‘A generalisation ending in the Personal God’; says Vivekananda, ‘can never be universal’ (165) People in its struggle to realise the ultimate truth goes further and realises God as the Absolute …… ‘It is unseen, unrelated, inconceivable, uninferable, unimaginable, indescribable. It is the essence of the one self-cognition common to all states of consciousness. All phenomena cease in it. It is peace, it is bliss, it is non-duality’. (166) As to the relation of God and the Absolute, Vivekananda opines that God is a circle with its circumference nowhere and centre everywhere. Every point in that circle is living, conscious, active, and works equally. With our limited souls, only one point is conscious. This point moves forward and backward. As the body has a very infinitesimal existence in comparison with that of the universe, the whole universe, in comparison with God, is nothing. When we talk of God speaking, we say He speaks through His universe. When we speak of Him beyond all limitations of time and space, we say He is an Impersonal Being. But He is the same Being. (167)

In reply to a question regarding the relation between God and Absolute Vivekananda writes in one of his Epistles, where he quotes from the book Kusumanjali:

“He who is the Brahman of the Vedantins, Ishvara of the Naiyayikas, Purusha of the Sankhyas, cause of the Mimamsakas, law of the Buddhists, absolute zero of the Atheists, and love infinite unto those that love, may (He) take us all under His merciful protection”. (168)

Vivekananda is in agreement to such a view and it is akin to …
Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Ramakrishna opines, that in spite of the subtle differences amongst the Philosophers, while using the ‘word’ to express the Reality ... they actually come to the same conclusion. To him, the ‘indivisible non-dual Reality’ experienced by the seers, as the ‘Void’ and the ‘Full’ of others (i.e. the Sunya and Purna) imply the same experience. “The Reality that has been called by the Buddha as the ‘Void’ (the Sunya) in which all beings get extinguished, has been described by the Sankara as the ‘Full’ (the Purna), which constitutes the unmodified substratum of them all. If we leave aside the opinions of the later Buddhist teachers and study Buddha and Sankara, we irresistibly come to this conclusion”. 

Vivekananda says that there are two processes in knowing the Absolute. One of the process is the positive while the other is the negative. The positive is through love. When this circle of love is increased indefinitely, we can reach the one universal love. The other is the “Neti”, “Neti” ...... “not this”, “not this”. In this process the mind is withdrawn from every aspect of modification. In this state the mind dies as it were and the Real discloses itself. This is the state of Samadhi or super consciousness. The negative process is for the Philosophers in knowing the Absolute. We are actually trying to realise the Reality. Instinctively we are always trying to do that. It is creation in the human soul that covers up God. This is the cause of all differences in God – ideals. When creation stops then only we can find the Absolute. So the Absolute is in the soul and not in creation. When we think of ourselves, we think of the body. When we think of God we think Him as body. Vivekananda opines, “To stop the gyrations of the mind, so that the soul may become manifested, is the work”.

Man is the highest being that exists. We can have no conception of God higher than man. Hence our God is man and man is God. When we try to find something higher and go beyond, we have to jump out of the mind, the body and leave this world. When we rise to be the Absolute, we are no longer in this world. Man is the apex of the world we know. All we know of animals is by analogy. We judge them by what we do and feel ourselves. The difference, in the same total of knowledge which is same, is in degree only. The only source of it is always from within. Unlike Kant, Vivekananda never expressed doubt about the real existence of God. Kant writes that the human reason cannot bridge the abyss between the contingency of the phenomenal world and the
absolute necessity of God. The beauty and manifoldness of nature infer of its cause and
continuance. But outside the field of experiences the principle of causality has no
meaning. All synthetic principles of the understanding are applicable only in the
phenomenal realm. He again says that we can reach the concept of a Supreme Being only
transcendently and for which our understanding is not prepared. (172) For Kant the idea of
God is a mere fiction and has no objective validity. As he asserts, "Reason does not
determine the objective validity of such a concept, but yields only the idea of something
which is the ground of the highest and necessary unity of all empirical reality". (171)

For Vivekananda too, like Kant, reason can go only a little way and it has to stop
When we try to push, it results in confusion. Reason itself becomes unreasonable. There
is always a feeling to get the Infinite and to go beyond the mighty barrier which ties
before reasoning. Therefore, 'there must be some other instrument to take us beyond, and
that instrument is called inspiration'. (174) But unlike Kant, Vivekananda conceives God in
a different way. To quote Vivekananda in this respect, 'We cannot imagine anything which
is not God. He is all that we can imagine with our five senses, and more. He is like a
chameleon; each man each nation, sees one face of Him and at different times, in
different forms'. (175)

According to Shankaracharya mind is not God ...... "Tal tvam asi". 'Aham
Brahmasmi"... That thou art, I am Brahman. When a man realises this, "all the knots of
his heart are cut asunder, all his doubts vanish". (176) Vivekananda's view in this respect
comes very near to Shankaracharya. As Vivekananda emphasizes that man does not
manufacture God out of his own brain. He can only see God in the capacity of his own
imaginations. He attributes to God the best of all he knows. Each attribute is the
whole of God. This is the metaphysical explanation of the personal God. Ishvara is thus without
form yet has all forms. He is without qualities yet has all qualities. We as human being
thus can see the trinity of existence ...... God, man and nature. (177)

For Ramanuja the universe is divided into 'Chit, Achit and Ishvara ... man,
nature and God; conscious, sub-conscious and super conscious. (178) Shankaracharya on the
contrary, says that Chit, the soul, is the same as God. God is truth, is knowledge, is
infinity. These are not qualities. Any thought of God is a qualification. All that can be
said of Him is ...... "Om tat sat". (179)
Shankaracharya and Vivekananda both make a distinction between Absolute and God from the standpoint of maya. Beyond Maya the distinction gets dissolved. The Impersonal gets identified with personal. Shankaracharya declares that Brahman is both determinate (Saguna) and indeterminate (Nirguna). Shankaracharya conceives that God merely appears and disappears in his Philosophy. He puts every stress on Brahman only God ceases to exist with the cessation of Maya. The Absolute like Vivekananda cannot response to any human passion and love. Hence Brahman cast through the moulds of logic is Isvara. Isvara is not the highest reality. God has no meaning for the highest experience where existence and context are no longer separated. But God is the best image of truth possible under our present condition of knowledge. The Saguna Brahman is not merely the self projection of the yearning spirit or a floating air bubble. The gleaming ideal is the way in which the everlasting real appears to our human mind. Like Shankaracharya, Vivekananda also asserts a double conception of Brahman - Saguna - Brahman and Nirguna- Brahman - a kind of personal God with attributes and an Impersonal Absolute to whom attributes are not strictly applicable. As Vivekananda says, “So long as we are deluded by the idea of our identity with the body we must have a Personal God”. Ordinary man cannot easily transcend the sensible world so to grasp the higher ideals of religion and thus the Absolute - the highest notion Vivekananda therefore asserts,

“The highest ideal in our scriptures is the Impersonal, but since all cannot realize that Impersonal idea, it is absolutely necessary for the vast majority of human beings to have a personal ideal”.

According to Vivekananda, the Absolute is unchangeable and immovable. All the movements and changes are limited only in the phenomenal world. The whole is Impersonal. The problem arises then what becomes of the desire of the human heart to pray for help to some being who is Impersonal, To this question we can refer to the opinion of Vivekananda. As he says, that within this impersonal exists all various persons beginning with the lowest atom, up to God, the Personal God, the Creator, the Ruler of the Universe, to whom we pray, before whom we kneel, and so on. Personal God is explicable as the highest manifestation of the Impersonal. Every manifestations including the Personal God is the highest of which we can conceive. It is necessary that we first
know the Impersonal in order to know the Personal. (183) So for Vivekananda, everything will remain. The Personal God will remain on a better basis. He has been strengthened by the Impersonal. We have seen that without the Impersonal, the Personal cannot remain. "We cannot have devotion without a Personal God. There must be the lover and the beloved. God is an infinitised human being. It is bound to be so, for so long as we are human, we must have a humanised God, we are forced to see a Personal God and Him". (184)

This reminds us the observation of Radhakrishnan. He writes that when the Absolute is pure unity without any extension or variation, God is the creative power by which world springs into existence. It is the Absolute which has become the 'knowledge-will', from its 'primal poise'. It is the Absolute in action as Lord and Creator. The Absolute is spaceless, timeless, potentiality while God is the vast self awareness, comprehending and apprehending every possibility. (185) To quote the words of Ramakrishna is this respect, "It is He alone who has become the universe, living beings and the twenty-four cosmic principles. When He is actionless, I call Him Brahman, when He creates, preserves and destroys, I call Him Sakti. Brahman and Sakti are not different from each other. Water is water, whether it is still or moving". (186)

Radhakrishnan emphatically stated that the Absolute of Shankaracharya cannot kindle passionate love and adoration in the soul. "We cannot", says he, "worship the Absolute whom no one hath seen or can see, who Dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto. The formless (nirakaram) Absolute is conceived as formed (akaravat) for the purposes of worship". (187) For Radhakrishnan God is not 'higher reality' but the 'highest reality'. In so far as the finite being views the Supreme Reality from the cosmos, God stands as the highest reality. As he writes "God who is the creator, sustainer and judge of the world is not totally unrelated to the Absolute". (188)

To Spinoza, substance is one, infinite, self-caused and eternal reality from which all things follow necessarily. He calls substance as God. God or substance is an all inclusive whole, outside of which nothing can lie. Hence Nature which is a whole is identical with God. Nature or God being 'causa sui' is self-creating. God is conceived as a 'free cause', by Spinoza and so nothing can determine his action. 'God as nature is simply an all – inclusive, inter-related logical system'. A logical system has no room for will. So
his God is free from feeling and willing. Spinoza advocates an Impersonal God as he equates God with Nature. (189)

But unlike Spinoza Vivekananda's God responses in human crisis, prayer worships also. It is the Personal God who understands us and guides us. The Impersonal cannot have any attribute. Relevant in this context is the observation of J.P. Suda. He writes, "There is something in the make up of man which forces him to set up a supreme being in whom he can find solace and comfort during periods of gloom and crisis". (190) For Vivekananda, religion is a constitutional necessity. But Spinoza on the other hand rejects western theology. In western theology God is a personal Being, having will, intellect and feeling. The God of Judaism and Christianity hearkens to the prayers and alleviates the suffering of devotees. So God is personal. (191)

Bradley's theory of the Absolute is akin to Spinoza. The Absolute, he asserts is timeless. It has in itself no history or progress. (192) To quote Bradley, "Nothing perfect nothing genuinely real, can move. The Absolute has no seasons, but all at once bears its leaves, fruit, and blossoms". (193) Again his God cannot be identified with the Absolute for he says "If you identify the Absolute with God, that is not God of Religion. If again, you separate them, God becomes a finite factor in the whole". (194) According to Bradley God is a finite object standing above and apart from man. God, if taken as a thinking and feeling being, has a private personality. But when surrendered from these relations which qualify him, God is inconsistent emptiness. When qualified by his relation to an Other, he becomes a distracted finitude. God is, for Bradley, transcend this external relation. He wills and knows himself and he finds his reality and self-consciousness in union with man. (195)

A slightly similar view is shared by Vivekananda who says that we are all projected from one common centre, which is God. The highest as well as the lowest life God ever projected, will come back to the Father of all lives. As he writes, "From whom all beings are projected, in whom all live, and unto whom they all return, that is God". (196) Radhakrishnan also opines that God is the very Absolute in the world context and not the mere appearance of the Absolute. (197)

Hegel identifies his Absolute with God. The Absolute is spiritual. According to him there is only one Reality. This one Reality is an all inclusive and self - consistent
whole. The Absolute for him is pictured as a system of changing entities. The Absolute is thus a storehouse of infinite possibilities which are progressively and realised in history and actual happenings of the world. (198) This view of Hegel reminds us of Ramanuja who conceives "Brahman as the Absolute. Brahman is the whole of Reality and the abode of eternal attributes. The word 'Brahman' denotes "the highest person (Purushottama) who is essentially free from all imperfections and possesses numberless classes of auspicious qualities of unsurpassable excellence". (199) The attribute that we generally ascribe to the God of Religion has been described to the Absolute of Ramanuja.

Tagore has also not made a sharp distinction between the Absolute and God. As he opines, “He is the highest of human beings, nay, the highest of all beings, for he has relised his identity with the Absolute, he has realised that he is one with God”. So long we think that there is least difference from God, fear will always seize us. But when we have known that we are He, all differences and fear ceases. Being Brahman we are always That.

But Vivekananda on the other hand does not identify Absolute with God. To him, the Absolute can never be thought of. We can have no idea of a thing unless it is finite. God the infinite can only be conceived as worshipped as the finite. (201) We can be conscious of the Absolute, but we can never express It. The moment we try to express It, we limit Brahman and It ceases to be Absolute. Radhakrishnan too does not identify Absolute with God. He writes, “When we emphasize the ineffable character of the Reality, its transcendence of subject – object relation, we call it the Absolute. When we look at it, as the creative principle of all existence, we conceive it as God. The Absolute and God are two statuses of the same Reality”. (202) But for Vivekananda, the real study is that by which we realise the Unchangeable. This is possible neither by reading, nor believing, nor reasoning, but by super conscious perception and Samadhi. When a man has reached that perfect state, he is of the same nature as the Personal God: “I and my Father are one”. He knows himself one with Brahman, the Absolute, and projects himself as does the Personal God. The Personal God is the Absolute looked at through the haze of Mavo Ignorance. (203)
3.8 Distinction between Morality and Religion
in the thought of Vivekananda

*I am but a poor struggling soul yearning to be wholly good—*
*wholly truthful and wholly none-violent in thought, word and deed,*
*but ever failing to reach the ideal which I know to be true.*
*It is a painful climb, but the pain of it is a positive pleasure to me.*
*Each step upward makes me feel stronger and fit for the next——*

Mahatma Gandhi

In every religion there is the explanation of the struggle towards freedom. This is the
ground work of morality, of unselfishness. Every system of ethics preach absolute unselfishness
as the goal so also with Hindu ethics. Religion is intimately connected with morality in
Hinduism. According to Hinduism the realisation of God is the ultimate aim. Morality is the
means through which one can reach the goal. The Vedas and Upanishads are the sources of the
ethical principles. To this we can quote from our scriptures, “The goal of life is not the attainment
of ethical perfection through moral action, but rather liberation from the dual conflicts of the
phenomenal world and the attainment of supreme felicity …… Ethical virtues are cultivated
not for their own sake but to serve a higher end. Ethics is based upon metaphysics and is
determined by it ….” (204) Here we shall concentrate on Vivekananda’s views regarding the
relation between Morality and Religion. It is Vivekananda too who has accepted that the
ethical teachings of Hinduism are contained in the books of the Vedas. As he observes, “The
cardinal features of the Hindu religion are founded on the meditative and speculative philosophy
and on the ethical teachings contained in the various books of the Vedas, which assert that the
universe is infinite in space and eternal in duration. It never had a beginning, and it never will
have an end”. (205)

For Vivekananda religion is intimately connected with morality. Though it is not possible
to have religion without morality yet religion is something more than morality. So religion
must have an ethical foundation. If Ethics is disregarded, religions will become tools of cruelty
and oppression. Like the Vedantic doctrine, Vivekananda opines that every soul has behind it
the infinite power which it tries to manifest. But the fundamental problem in this process of
self-manifestation is the removal obstacles in the form of selfishness and vices. Ethical life
removes these obstacles but it is not religion in itself. When the obstacles are removed, Divinity
manifests itself gradually. This divine life is true religion. (206) There can be no spirituality
without truth, non-injury, continence, non-stealing, cleanliness and austerity. In the field of
moral development, he lays stress on two moral principles... unselfishness and strength.
According to him, ‘The only definition that can be given of morality is this : that which is
selfish is immoral, and that which is unselfish is moral’. (207) The idea of unselfishness is
based on the idea of the basic oneness of humanity in God.

The goal of all nature is freedom. Freedom can be attained by perfect unselfishness.
Every unselfish word and deed take us towards the goal. This is called moral. This definition
holds good in every religion and every system of ethics. According to Vivekananda ethical
laws of the world stand on two strong pillars. One law leads to happiness by separating ourselves
from everyone. The other is of self-sacrifice. Both spring from the search of happiness. While
One in finding happiness, in our senses and in injuring others. While the other, in finding
happiness in doing good to others, through the sense of others. Morality is a relative term.
Vivekananda puts the question that “Is there anything like absolute morality in this world”.
He replies that such an idea is superstition. We have no right to judge every man in every age
by the same standard. The great misfortune that may fall upon the world if all mankind recognise
and accept one religion, one universal form of worship, one standard of morality. This will
certainly be the death-blow to all religious and spiritual progress. Vivekananda observes that
our Upanishads provide us the basis of morality for which the world is striving for. The teaching
of oneness of existence is the basis of all morality. All the confusing state of affairs... the
feeling of hatred, jealousy, unmanliness are rooted in our Upanishadic teaching of oneness of
existence. To quote him in this context thus : “The cry for morality is coming also, and that is
to be found in our books. The explanation of morality, the foundation of ethics, that also the
world wants ; and that it will get here”. (208)

The Vedanta philosophy teaches us to realise unity in variety because unity in variety
is the plan of nature. According to Vivekananda variation is the sign of life. It is impossible to
aim for absolute sameness. Wherever there is life, difference and distinction are inevitable.
The aim of ethics is to bring unity amidst diversity. “The highest ethical codes that mankind
has discovered up to the present time know no variation; they have no time to stop to look into it; their one end is to make for that sameness. The Indian mind, being more analytical, I mean the Vedantic mind ....... found this unity as the result of all its analyses, and wanted to base everything upon this one idea of unity". (209)

To Vivekananda every religion preaches that the essence of all morality is to do good to others. But they have failed to give reason for ‘doing good to others’. It is only in the Advaita, morality is explained. We can explain morality only when we know the truth as given in the Gita,

“No action can touch me. I have no desire for the results of action. Who so ever knows me thus knows: the secret and is not bound by action. The ancient sages, knowing this secret (could safely engage in action). Do thou work in the same fashion”. (210) The Karma yoga of the Bhagavadgita is our religion. Unselfish work and calmness of mind are needed for practicing the ideal of Karma-yoga. The world of ours is a Karma-Bumi and Karma yogi is never determined by any sectarian attitude. Karma - yoga is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works. The Karmayogi do not believe even in God or any metaphysical speculation but still work out his aim of being unselfishness.

Religion is realisation. It is not mere intellectual cogitation. It cannot be known in the ordinary sense of the world. It is not mere groping in darkness but intense realisation. Religion is more real than this world of sense. Religion appears to be non-essential only to those to whom everything appears to be transitory. Thus Vivekananda remarks : “To the person who never finds a moment to question the credentials of his senses, whose every moment is occupied with some sort of sense enjoyment even to him death comes, and also is compelled to ask, ‘Is this real?’ Religion begins with this question and ends with its answer”. (211) So to make the assertion that ‘I am God’ is not possible within the sense world. The affirmation of one’s divinity can be applied only to the noumenal. If I am God, I am beyond the tendencies of the senses and will not do evil. Morality, explains Vivekananda, is not the goal of man but the means through which this freedom is attained. Through the process of Yoga says Vedanta, we can realise this divinity from within. Hence morality and ethics will all range themselves in their proper places. (212)

Morality cannot be developed from fear of a personal God. It is the worship of impersonal God than the personal one which has resulted in gigantic moral powers. I owe
cannot come through fear. Its basis is freedom. When we really begin to love the world, then only we realise the meaning of brotherhood or mankind. Thus the soul in essence is the same in all forms. This unity of soul is the sole substance of Humanity and is the ground of ethics and morality. In this sense we are all one. This implies that to hurt one's brother is to hurt oneself. “All religion is to be based on morality”, Vivekananda also asserts, “and personal purity is to be counted superior to Dharma. In this connection it ought to be known that Achara means purity inside and outside...” (213) Through purity we can embrace all. We can love all. We can realise the truth of existence. This realisation of unity of existence is our goal and can be achieved through purity of hearts. No force can be created. It can only be directed. We must learn to control the grand powers that are already in us. By will power we must make them spiritual instead of animal. Thus it is clearly seen that chastity is the corner stone of all morality and of all religion

According to Vivekananda Virtue tends to our improvement while vice to our degeneration. Man is made up of three qualities, viz. ... brutal, human and godly. Virtue is that which tends to increase the divinity in us. Vice is that which tends to increase the brutality in us. We must destroy the brutal nature and become human (loving and charitable). We must transcend that too and become pure bliss. It is the stage of ‘Sachchidananda, fire without burning, wonderfully loving, but without the weakness of human love, without the feeling of misery’. (214)

The dualist attitude of making us moral with a rod in the hands of God, makes us actually more immoral. The fear of the whip only makes us more immoral. The basis of all social political systems rests upon the goodness of men. No nation is great or good because the Parliament enacts the law. Religion goes to the root of the matter. When religion is right everything is right. “........I shall call you a worshipper of God when you have become able to realise the Idea. Before that it is the spelling of words and no more. It is this power of realisation that makes religion; no amount of doctrines or philosophies, or ethical books, that you may have stuffed into your brain, will matter much .... only what you are and what you have realised”. (215)

As an example Vivekananda cites the life of Buddha. Buddha never cared for the dualists gods and has been called an atheist and materialist. But he was ready to give up his body for a poor goat. Buddha has set in motion highest moral ideas any nation can have.
Vivekananda observes thus, "What is now wanted is a combination of the greatest heart with the highest intellectuality, of infinite love with infinite knowledge". (216) We want harmony of Existence knowledge and Bliss Infinite. Self-abnegation is the centre of all morality. The idea of 'me and mine' is the consequence of past superstition. The more the real self becomes manifest, the apparent self (present self) passes away. This is true self-abnegation. The centre, the basis, the gist of moral teaching. The whole world is slowly going towards this self-abnegation. But mankind is doing it unconsciously. To put in the words of Vivekananda in this context, "Let them do it unconsciously. Let them make the sacrifice, knowing that 'me and mine' is not the real self, but only a limitation ...... the infinite is his true nature". (217)

Thus when a man reaches this point of abnegation, he goes beyond moral struggle, beyond everything. He sees that the same divinity is being manifested itself in every existence. A man who has acquired this sameness in this life has conquered all existence. God is pure. Such a man is said to be living God. Vivekananda observes that the Hindu's conception of "sin" is not the same as the west. Evil deeds are not sins. We are not offending a ruler while committing sin. We are actually injuring ourselves. We must suffer the penalty. It is not sin to put one's finger in the fire. As he said, "All deeds produce certain results, and 'every deed returns to the doer'. 'Trinitarianism is an advance on Unitarianism. The first step upward is when we recognise ourselves as the children of God; the last step is when we realise ourselves as the One, the Atman'. (218)

Hence the virtue that Vivekananda has stressed most is strength and fearlessness. Strength is the sovereign virtue that every man needs. Without strength, it is not possible to practice properly any other virtue. Vivekananda thus aptly remarks: 'Strength is goodness, weakness is sin'. (219) This is indeed a novel way of teaching moral values. Strength is the foundation for the practise of every other virtues. He has again given importance to physical strength and moral strength. Real strength comes from the realisation of the true Self of man. Even a strong faith in the divinity of the Self is enough to give one great strength.

Vedanta teaches us to know a God which is present in every being and is felt as more real than the sense. To see God and realise all the times who is present in every being is the most practical God. "The God of the Vedanta is most known of all and is not the outcome of imaginations". (220) So there is a great scope for beneficent work both here and elsewhere. The wonderful idea of sameness and omnipresence of the Supreme Soul has to be preached for the
Virtues and graces which are gained can become the basis of the highest spiritual development of man. Without this moral basis, religion becomes short of spirituality. When Vivekananda has talked of religion, he used the beautiful expression to characterise its content: He calls it 'man-making religion'. He has broad cast the life-giving message of Vedanta to one and all. “These conceptions of the Vedanta must come out,” says Vivekananda, “must remain not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come out to work at the bar and the bench ….. let everyone be taught that the Divine is within, and everyone will work out his own salvation.” (221)

This view of Vivekananda is akin to Radhakrishnan. Radhakrishnan also observes that the human spirit is the part and parcel of the eternal spirit. When man tries to separate his existence from the eternal, he is never satisfied. Man can never find satisfaction by claiming self-sufficiency for he is not self-sufficient in himself. Radhakrishnan has observed thus that any serious search after convictions, ideas and adventures after virtue, arises from the resources of religion. (222)

To Vivekananda it is impossible to manifest the infinite through the finite. When man learns to give up this manifestation, renunciation starts. This renunciation, this giving up is the background of ethics. To quote him, “Renunciation is the very basis upon which ethics stands. There never was an ethical code preached which had not renunciation for its basis”. Renunciation stands for religious action. Religious action does not mean mere performances of religious rites. It means doing things for the perfection of one's own self and for others. “It is true that this is the only path to religion, Renounce and give up …..” (224) Sambudhanandu writes about the ideal of renunciation and service of Vivekananda in the following words thus: “None can realise what renunciation is until and unless it finds its expression in and through selfless service. Service without renunciation is lifeless and renunciation without service is meaningless. Renunciation without service is a soul without a body and service without renunciation is a body without soul”. (225)

This reminds us the words of Ramakrishnan who also said that in this age work without devotion to God has no legs to stand upon. It becomes like a foundation of sand. So we have to cultivate first, devotion. All other things … schools, dispensaries etc., will work spontaneously. So devotion first and then work. (226)
Vivekananda points out that pleasure may be the goal of life for men who desire for sensual satisfaction. Again there are many who seek pleasure in intellectual and accordingly culture activities. But there are men who aim at something higher. This is due to the spiritual inclination of the person in knowing spiritual facts of the work. So even for attaining pleasure, religion is very necessary for man. As he very aptly opines “So even on the utilitarian ground that man is to seek for pleasure, he should cultivate religious thought, for it is highest pleasure that exists. Thus, religion as a study, seems to me to be absolutely necessary”. (227) So long as we are within our consciousness, we are Dvaitists. Beyond that we are Advaitists. According to Advaitism we have to love every man as our own self and not as brother as in Christianity. Brotherhood must supersede by universal selfhood. So Advaitism also may include ‘greatest happiness’ theory. (228)

Hence both religion and morality can support each other on a broad – based principle. Both religion and morality can overcome every conflict among themselves and can have the same starting point of multiplicity. In religion it is the realisation of the Oneness and in morality it is goodness which is possible because of this Oneness. Again realisation of this ‘Oneness’ is possible beyond the phenomenal. We are pure and perfect. There is a state beyond good and evil and that is our state of Divinity. It is higher than good. Good is only lesser differentiation than evil. Thus Religion comes when the actual realisation of our soul begins. With the dawn of religion, morality starts. We shall be truly moral only when we have realised religion.
REFERENCE AND NOTES

1. Sadhana

C.f. To this view of faith even David Hume said, 'Our most holy religion is founded on faith, not on reason'.
Quoted, Cahn, Steven M. 'Philosophy of Religion' P.-330

2. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda

C.f. To such a view of Vivekananda, we can refer to the feelings of Radhakrishnan. For Radhakrishnan also religion as a way of life seeks the eternal. It is more behaviour than belief. If we believe in God we must act in the light of that faith. Spirituality is the core and the inward essence of religion.

Eastern Religions and Western Thought. 'Mysticism And Ethics In Hindu Thought'.

3. Ibid. Vol 2 P-377

4. The Message of Vivekananda

P - 18

5. Complete Works

Vol 3 P - 1

6. Fromm Enrich, 'Psycho-analysis of Religion

PP -18-19

7. To this view Vivekananda emphatically stated, 'So I preach only the Upanishads. If you look, you will find that I have never quoted anything but the Upanishads. And of the Upanishads, it is only that One idea strength. The quintessence of the Vedas and Vedanta and all lies in that one word ................. Strength and fearlessness.

Complete Works

Vol. 8 P. 267

8. Ibid.

Vol 3 P. -457

delivered in New York, 1896.


P.-89

Vivekananda further asserts here that the ideal of Hinduism lies in its catholicity and universality. If it is perfectly realised, it can be the possible ideal for a universal religion ... a religion which will be the sum total of all creeds “and still have infinite space for development”.

Loc. cit.


C.f. To this view we can quote him ‘science has proved to me that physical individuality is a delusion, that really my body is one little continuously changing body in an unbroken ocean of matter, and Advaita (Unity) is the necessary conclusion with my other counterpart, Soul.

Selections From Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda. P.11


14. Man P.2

15. Complete Works Vol. 1 Intro


C.f. Once Vivekananda wrote to Alasinga, dated 6th May, 1895 (U.S.A).... Now I will tell you my discovery. All of religion is contained in the Vedanta, that is, in the three stages of the Vedanta philosophy, the Daita, Vishistadvaita and Advaita, one comes after the other. These are the three stages of spiritual growth in man.

17. The Message of Vivekananda P.2

18. Ninian Smart: The Religious Experience of Mankind P.4

19. The life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel. P.26

20. The Message of Vivekananda P.7

21. Schopenhaver rationalised the Vedas while Shankaracharyahas maintained the orthodoxy of the Vedas.

Complete Works Vol 7 P.5
22. Selections From Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda

23. Marie Louise Burke: Swami Vivekananda in the West. Vol. 4 P-185

24. Otto's 'Idea of the Holy' is probably the best attempt at interpreting religion within the sphere of Occidental thinking. In it he expressed, 'This mental state is perfectly sui generis and irreducible to any other; and therefore, like every absolutely primary and elementary datum, while it admits of being discussed it cannot be strictly defined.' But he could not succeed because of the theological blink which constitute the fundamental characteristic in explaining religion.

25. The Varieties of Religious Experience P-42

26. Religion and Society . P-44

27. B. Russell: History of Western Philosophy. P-706

28. But the 'Subjectivity' in Kierkegaard's philosophy is an ambiguous term. We are not entering in its detail study. In his 'Concluding Unscientific Postscript', we find thus, 'The entire Christian terminology has been appropriated by speculative thought to its own purposes, under the assumption that speculative thought and Christianity are identical'. M.K. Bhadra: A Critical Survey of Phenomenology and Existentialism. P-284

29. Complete Works Vol. 3 P-284

30. To quote Vivekananda in this context, "Thus the whole object of their system is by constant struggle to become perfect, to become divine, to reach God and see God, and this reaching God, seeing God, becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect, constitutes the religion of the Hindus.
Ibid. Vol. 1 P-15

31. F. Schleiermacher, On Religion: speeches to its cultured despisers P-39

C.f. So says Vivekananda in this reference. 'Get away from all books and forms and let your soul see its Self ...... Religion is one, but its application must be
The vision of Sri Ramkrishna, when he was enjoying the Madhura Bhava, established a firm conviction in his mind. "The three... the Bhagavata (this scripture), the Bhakta (the devotee) and the Bhagavan (the divine Lord) ...are One and the One is the three".

53. Marie Louise Burke: Swami Vivekananda in the West Vol. 1 P. 4
54. Op cit, Quoted P. 7
57. Roman Rolland:
   The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel P. 269.
58. Complete Works Vol 7 P. 55
   ‘Inspired Talks’ Wednesday, July 17.
59. The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel. P. 212
60. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishnan II, P. 223 et seq., I, P. 252 et seq.
61. S. Radhakrishnan: Eastern Religions and Western Thought P. 51
62. By His Eastern and Western Disciples:
   The life Swami Vivekananda Vol. 1 P. 207
63. What Religion is In the words of Swami Vivekananda. P. 3
64. Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda P. 286
65. Complete Works Vol 3 P. 160
To explain this reflection, Vivekananda often said the story of a lion who imagined himself to be a sheep, until another lion showed him his reflection in a pool. (Intro What religion is, In the words of Swami Vivekananda PP xviii xiv)

C.f. The Hindus, Vivekananda said, worship the same God as the Christians. The Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, Siva is merely an embodiment of God the creator, the preserver and the destroyer. We consider the three as separate because the general humanity must have its ethics made possible. So the material images of Hindu gods are simply symbols of divine qualities.

C.f. The God of Infinite Love and the object of Love sublime and infinite are painted blue. Krishna is painted blue, so also Solomon's God of Love. It is a natural law that anything sublime and infinite is associated with blue colour. For e.g. the space near us is colourless. But the infinite expanse of the sky is blue.
In our view the Spirit, the Self is the fundamental reality of existence, but an exclusive concentration on this fundamental reality to the exclusion of all reality of Mind, Life or Matter except as an imposition on the Self or unsubstantial shadows cast by the Spirit might help to an independent and radical spiritual realisation but not to an integral and valid solution of the truth of cosmic and individual existence.

Sri Aurobindo : The Live Divine

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<td>C.f. Vivekananda often in a fire of passion used to say, ‘Go into your own room and get the Upanisads out of your own Self. You are the greatest book that ever was or ever will be, the infinite depository of all that is’</td>
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C.f. Vivekananda identifies materialism with Spiritualism at the backdrop of Advaita. Since he writes ‘I am a materialist in a certain sense, because I believe that there is only One. That is what the materialist wants you to believe; only he calls it matter and I call it God’.

Op cit

Vivekananda in his flaming passion for service and power of synthesis from his master cried out in a passion of anguish: ‘May I be born and reborn again and suffer a thousand miseries if only I am able to worship the only God in whom I believe, the sum-total of all souls, and above all my God the wicked, my God the afflicted, my God the poor of all races’
C.f. Vivekananda did not talk much about the gods, goddess, ceremonies etc. He opines that it is an insult to a starving people to offer them metaphysics. It is living religion alone which can be able to wipe the widow’s tears and bring food to the orphans.

Complete Works Vol 5 P -588

148. Complete Works Vol.2 P-164

149. Hindu Dharma P -43

150. Complete Works Vol.5 P -275

151. The Religions of the World P -588

152. Vivekananda, A Biography P -366

153. Talks with Swami Vivekananda PP -473-74

C.f Vivekananda’s epistle VII, Vol 5 P -27


Unless there is total surrender to one’s Ego, the ‘I’ cannot be release. The Atman is the ‘I’ ........ the Universal Life- Force Energy. This is free from all relative knowledge “The refue in Me alone”..........means be established in the Atman” This is knowledge of the Atman is the highest aim of the Gita. Arjuna could fight the battle only when he saw the Universal Form of the Lord and became established in the Atman.

Op cit. PP -304-02

155. Complete Works Vol.5. P -147

156. Complete Works Vol 1 P 76

157. Rabindranath Tagore: Nationalism P 60

158. Radhakrishnan : Religion and Society. P 78

159. By His Eastern and Western Disciples: Vivekananda, The Man And His Message PP -177 78

160. Loc. Cit.
161. Vivekananda: Practical Vedanta II (Quoted)
Complete Works
Vol. 2 PP - 319-20
C.f. As Zimmer also writes, “The Highest Being as ‘God’, is phenomenal a majestic, lordly face painted on the sublime blank of Brahman, true being, which is devoid of physiognomy as well as of all other attributes and definitions”.
(H. Zimmer : Philosophies of India) P -427
162. Radhakrishnan: An Idealist View of Life
P - 271
163. The Basic Writings of S. Radhakrishnan (ed.)
PP -141-42
164. Vivekananda: Notes Taken Down in Madras, 1892-93
165. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda
Vol. 1 P -119
To this view Marie Louise Burke writes “Fools are the, who think that rituals and doing good work are high, and there is nothing higher. They get what they desire and go heave, but every enjoyment, and every sorrow, must have an end, and so that ends and they fall back and back, become men again, or still lover. Those that give up the world, and learn to control the senses, live in a forest, through the rays of the sun they reach that immortality where lives He who is the Absolute”.
New Discoveries, ‘The World Teacher’ P -558
166. Mundukya Upanishad, 7.
Form and formless are intertwined in this world. The formless can only be expressed in form and form can only be thought with the formless. The world is a form of our thoughts. The idol is the expression of religion. This is the view of Vivekananda.
Complete Works Vol. 6 P -115
167. Vivekananda: Notes Of Class Talks And Lectures
‘God : Personal And Impersonal’.
168. Complete Works Vol. 7 P -456
169. Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master Vol. 1 P -250
170. Vivekananda: A Discussion (This discussion followed the lecture on the Vedanta Philosophy delivered by the Swami at the Graduate Philosophical Society of Harvard University, U.S.A., on March 25, 1891 (Vol. 1. V-20) Vivekananda opines, “To stop the gyrations of the mind, so that the soul may become manifested is the work.”
Complete Works Vol. 6 P -111
171. Complete Works Vol. 8 PP -34-35
Vivekananda writes to Allasiga, (U.S.A. 1894.) that work should be performed in the line of preaching and serving at the present time. This is no dream. We have to materialise the gospel of Gita ....... no dream. "Whosoever not trusting in anything else but Me, rests on Me, I supply him with everything he needs” (Gita, IX.22)

172. Frank Thilly : A History of Philosophy
173. Norman Kemp Smith : Immanuel Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason
174. Complete Works
So instinct, reason and inspiration are the three instruments of Knowledge. Instinct belongs to animals, reason to man and inspiration to God-man.

175. Ibid.

Unlike the traditional Oriental philosophy Buddha denies the existence not only of a creator but of any Absolute Being. Inspite of this denial Buddha claimed that he attained the Supreme and Absolute wisdom. Radhakrishnan observes about Buddha “He implies the reality of what Upanisads call Brahman, thought he takes the liberty of giving it another name dharma, to indicate its essentially ethical value for us on the empirical plane”. The Dhammapada

176. Vivekananda : Inspired Talks : Friday, July 12. (Shankara’s Commentary)

177. Complete Works
In view of trinity to quote Vivekananda, “When we return to earth and see the Absolute as relative, we see Sachchidananda as Trinity ..... Father, Son, Holy Ghost. Sat = the creating principle; Chit = the guiding principle ; Ananda = the realising principle, which joins us again to the One. No one can know ‘existence’ (Sat) except through knowledge. (Chit), and hence the force of the saying of Jesus. No man can see the Father save through the Son.


179. Loc. Cit.

180. S. Radhakrishnan : Indian Philosophy.
To quote Shankaracharya “We cannot worship the Absolute who not one hath seen or can see, who dwelleth in the light that no man can approach into. The formless (nirakaram) Absolute is conceived as formed (akaravata) for the purposes of worship”

Op cit.
This theme of identifying Impersonal and Personal is the essential truth revealed to Keshab Chandra Sen. In the conversation with Keshab, the Master thus said, "Thus one cannot think of Brahman without Sakti, or of Sakti without Brahman. One cannot think of the Absolute without the Relative, of the Relative without the Absolute...... Kali is verily Brahman, and Brahman is verily Kali. It is one and the same Reality ....... The Reality is one and the same, the difference is in name and form".

Op cit. : 'The Master And Keshab'.

187. S. Radhakrishnan : Indian Philosophy
188. S. Radhakrishnan : An Idealist View of Life
189. Y. Masih : A Critical History of Modern Philosophy
190. Religions in India
191. Y. Masih : A Critical History of Modern Philosophy
192. Mial D. Edward : The Philosophy of Religion
193. F.H. Bradley : Appearance and Reality
195. Op cit
196. Complete Works
197. S. Radhakrishnan and J.H.Muirhead (Ed.) : Contemporary Indian Philosophy
198. Y. Masih : A Critical History of Modern Philosophy
199. G. Thibaut : Ramanuja's commentary on the Vedanta Sutras, The Sacred Books of the East,
201. Complete Works
203. Vivekananda : The Essence of Religion (Report of lecture delivered in America)

Such a view of Vivekananda is also found in Six Lessons on Raja-Yoga. Mrs
This reminds us the wonderful words of morality proclaimed by various teachers:

'Thus seeing the same God equally present in all, the sage does not injure self by the self, and thus reaches the highest goal. Even in this life, they have conquered relative existence whose minds are firmly fixed on this sameness; for God is pure, and God is the same to all. Therefore such are said to be living in God.'

Ibid Vol. 1 PP. 434-35
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