CHAPTER - V
Comparative Study and Estimation
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5. Comparison and Estimation

There is not room for Death,
       Nor atom that his might could render void:
       Thou — Then art Being and Breath,
       And what Thou art may never be destroyed.

Emily Brontë

In the ‘Second Chapter’ we have explained the religious standpoint of both Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra. From this chapter it can be highlighted that the religious standpoint of Vivekananda is supernaturalism while Bankim Chandra is naturalism. For Vivekananda, Vedanta is the universal Religion. For Bankim Chandra, Religion is culture. Religion is perfect unity of existence, the essence of which is spirituality.

At the backdrop of these religious standpoints, here in this chapter we shall concentrate to compare and estimate both Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra. Both the thinkers being inspired by the ‘Vedantic Oneness’ admit that religion is the source of inspiration and strength of life. Religion comes from within and never from outside. Their specific objective is to make a scientific study of religion which requires to look at facts and not merely to the doctrines. Religion is a question of fact and not of talk. We have to understand it and realise what is understood. This is religion.\(^{(1)}\) In this context, Radhakrishnan too fashions his religious philosophy like a vedanta thinker. According to him religion is not the acceptance of academic abstractions or celebration of ceremonies. Religion is an insight into the nature of reality (darsana) or experience of reality (anubhava). This experience is the response of the whole personality to the central reality. Religion is a specific attitude of the self itself.\(^{(2)}\)

Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra again have applied the ‘approaches and applications’ of the ‘Rationalistic Method’ in justifying every religious scepticism of Hinduism in particular and religion in general. This ‘Rationalistic Method’ characterised the ‘new epoch-making in the 19th century religious movement of India. This trend
actually dominated every aspects of human existence.

With the establishment of Darwin’s theory of ‘Natural Selection’, the intervention of Supreme authority from outside has been discarded. Such a scientific temperament has brought a total change in every dimensions of human thinking. Neither in the case of the question about the creation of life, nor of Religion ...... ‘By the will of God’, since then, this answer is found justified. There is a point of agreement in Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra regarding their scientific approaches in religion. In their approach they admit that Hinduism which depends upon the Vedas is not a reveled religion. Vedas for them are neither God-spoken. According to Vivekananda, Vedas are the accumulated treasure of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times and situations. Bankim Chandra on the other hand holds that the meaning of the Vedas is found in the scripture Nirukta. The great sages are the ‘Nirukta- Preceptors’. Bankim Chandra too asserts that the mantras are stated to have been written down and not visualised as God - given by the hermits. His religion is a religion created by man. In the chapter ‘Krishna-Kathita Dharmatattwa, in Krishna-Caritra, Bankim Chandra writes, “Those who claim that religion is entirely revelation by divinity, whether the Vedas or the Bible or the Koran, and that there can be no religion beyond it, are very powerful even today. According to them, religion is confined to the word of divinity and is not a product of speculation. Such a notion is a barrier in the way to human progress difficult to cross’.

Though Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra have justified religious ideas from the scientific standpoint yet there lies a difference of opinion in their thinking. Through, ‘science of religion’ Vivekananda, never aimed at unifying the observances of various rites and ceremonies of religious institutions. Like other natural sciences whose goal is to find unity, ‘science of religion’ also aims to discover Him who is the one life in a universe of death. Bankim Chandra on the other hand holds that creation of religion is also a scientific theory. Exploration of religion has to be conducted through scientific methods. In scientific methods the general symptoms can be ascertained with reference to the symptoms to the particular. Thus Vivekananda’s purpose is to discover the essential ‘Truth’ of this universe. But Bankim Chandra, like a religious scientist is trying to explore religion through scientific method. The intention behind such exploration is to find out the real nature of Dharma. In his essay, ‘Caitanyavada’, Bankim Chandra has progressed
towards extreme rationalism. He writes, 'The rise of religion is a scientific fact. Hence it is best to study the religions of uncivilized communities to understand the origin of religion.' For both Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra there is no real fight between science and religion. Both are one. Real religion rises above mythology. But there is a difference of opinion between Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra. It is between 'Transcendental religion (supernaturalism) and Empirical Dharma (naturalism)' respectively. For Vivekananda, Vedanta and modern science hold in 'Itself' all the causes. For the Vedantist, the 'Atman' is the potency of the universe. While for the physicist it is in the 'Atom' ........ the invisible, unthinkable, the whole power and potency of the universe. Thus Vivekananda transcends every limitations of the phenomenal world. As a religious teacher he ultimately concludes that art, science and religion express the single truth in a different way.

To Bankim Chandra, the world relates to our well-being. The entire universe is favourable in every respect of our well-being. As the science is the cause of every progress according to the scientist similarly Dharma is also the cause of this progress. This is Bankim Chandra's empirical Dharma. So there is no need to quarrel regarding the dharma of men. Dharma belongs to the sphere of perfect happiness in this world. Like a religious scientist, Bankim Chandra puts it: The day when European science and industry will unite with India's doctrine of 'Nishkam dharma', on that day man will become God. Then that science and industry will be applied without any desire and never with any desire. While doing so he has come to realise that the world progress is guided and dependent on Dharma.

The 'Kernel and the Husk' represents Bankim Chandra's rationalistic method which is the most significant contribution amongst the English educated section of Bengal. To this we can put forward the view of Rakhal Chandra Nath. He observes that Bankim Chandra's insistence on the 'Kernel of the Hindu' faith as distinguished from the mere 'husk' .......... has categorically included the idolatry and the caste system of the Hindu practice. This essential new direction in Hindu thought is not an antagonistic to the Brahmo faith, but 'to its redundancy, in the changed historical circumstances'.

Vivekananda's exposition of the 'Vedanta Religion', reflects this lasting consequence, i.e. (Bankim Chandra's rationalistic method). But in Vivekananda's we find a
distinctive mark of spiritual effort. To highlight the sentiment of the Indians, well versed
in Sanskrit, he significantly remarked: "But in your country, all the fighting is going on
over the husk, nobody searches for the kernel within". This view of Vivekananda is
akin to Bankim Chandra's opinion in the Statesman, that intellectual superiority can make
a 'desperate bite at the husk not to its kernel'. Hence both the thinkers aimed at to reach
the depth of facts than mere external perfection. Vivekananda's religious illumination can
never be understood apart from a reference to the 'Edifice of Religion', which Bankim
Chandra has tried to establish in his treatise..... Dharmatattwa. In the mist of this
identical signification in the religious thoughts of both Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra,
there also exists certain subtle difference. For Vivekananda, religion is the experience of
life and personal illumination is attained through service to mankind. While Bankim
Chandra has never ventured for moksa as a path for religious conscience.

The conviction of the 'Divinity of every soul' constitutes the basis of
Vivekananda's religion. This sublime truth of the Vedanta resulted in his spiritual
enlightenment. For the 'Hindus religion', the leading principle is the inherent divinity of
the soul. The soul is Perfect, Eternal and One. Religion is the manifestation of divinity
already existing in man. The present demarcates the past and future. When good
predominates man moves to a higher plane. If evil has power, he degenerates. These two
forces are continually working within. So says Vivekananda emphatically ...... "All men
have sinned and come short of the glory of God".

"Call men sinners ? .... It is a sin to call men sinners ! "

For Sri Aurobindo also like Vivekananda, to become aware of Divinity within
oneself is the essential element of Indian Religion. According to Sri Aurobindo, the
essence of Indian religion is to aim at growing and living so that we can grow out of
the ignorance which veils this self-knowledge from our mind and life. Thus we have to
become aware of the Divinity within us. These three things put together are the whole of
Hindu religion. In its essential sense if any credo is needed it is its credo. "

'Philosophy of Religion' is a sub-field of philosophy devoted to the study of
religious phenomena. Although religions are complex systems of theory and practice,
philosophers tend to concentrate on evaluating religious truth claims.
academic standpoint, Vivekananda’s religious interpretations can be leveled as ‘Philosophy of Religion’. Like a religious philosopher he has evaluated every typical religious theories and practices including both myths and rituals. But an ‘analytical approach’ towards his hair splitting observations on religion shows that Vivekananda is not a religious philosopher. For he is not analysing religion for intellectual satisfaction. Vivekananda is a committed theologian. He looks at religion from within. To him the Universal religion of Vedanta gives equal rights to achieve spirituality to all men irrespective of all creeds and religious practices.

But Bankim Chandra’s rational observation of religious ideas can be coined as ethnological approach. Ethnology is an anthropological study. It is comparative and analytical study of cultures. He explains religious ideas for intellectual satisfaction. Bankim Chandra’s religious philosophy is an attempt at justifying religion and religious ideas against the critical attitude of western rationalism. Unlike western rationalism the determining principle in Bankim Chandra’s is Bhakti. Devotion in his philosophy is the criterion for achieving happiness in one’s life. For Bankim Chandra religion is that which helps in the highest development of man by establishing harmony in the development of the physical, mental and social. Perfect harmony in the human faculties is possible only when it is dedicated to God. Hence unlike Vivekananda, Bankim Chandra never aimed for personal illumination. Spiritual realisation is not the core of Bankim Chandra’s Dharma. But for both the thinkers, religion is not intellectual cogitation. For Vivekananda, the alpha and the omega for religion is realisation. While for Bankim Chandra it is belief. Otherwise for both the thinkers, religious doctrines are mere dead principles. Here for Vivekananda, religion is possible only in a super sensuous state of mind. As he puts it, “Religion is not attained through intellectual cogitation. It is reached through the super sensuous state of mind”. While for Bankim Chandra it is attained within the sense plane. It is thus the rational reflection. As Bankim Chandra proclaims that Dharma is the permanent substance of religion. Dharma is the Natural Law or Principle, which binds everything. Dharma is the only means of attaining happiness.

Unlike the ‘Young Bengal’, who have turned their back to the past both Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra have tried to find out the best of the indigenous thought and culture. The Young Bengal i.e. the Derozian, conditioned by their over
zealous acceptance of whatever the west has given, felt that ‘what was old and indigenous as retrogrades and useless’. Consequently in spite of the tremendous potentials of the intellectual movement of this modern group met a premature death.

Bankim Chandra admits the intellectual scholarship of European scholars. But that cannot be the determining factor to respect the learning ability of every European in every aspect of human thinking. Even the natives have their own way of contributions in understanding one’s culture. To understand any religion one must study the original sources of knowledge. One cannot yield any valuable results without a loving and reverential study of its doctrines. Otherwise the religious and philosophical treatises will be entirely distorted in the process of misrepresentations. In the letter ‘European Versions of Hindoo Doctrines’, Bankim Chandra suggests that Mr. Hastie must not discard Hindu religion, rather study the original Hindu scriptures.

The religion of the Oriental land is nothing but the blood sacrifice, polytheism and idolatry. This was the popular belief as propagated by the missionaries. What Vivekananda has refereed in his paper on Hinduism is a fact much akin to Bankim Chandra. Not only Vivekananda but every other speakers (who spoke in the First half of the Parliament of Religion) tried to clarify the ‘fast-embedded misconceptions regarding Eastern religions. In his paper Vivekananda tried to uproot the superiority of Christianity as highlighted by the missionaries “......The religious classification is simple...... to our own sense of superiority”. To this view, let us quote the heroic words of Vivekananda, “...... We look about us and we see England the most prosperous Christian nation in the world, with her foot on the neck of 250,000,000. Asiatics. We look back into history and see that the prosperity of Christian Europe began with Spain. Spain’s prosperity began with the invasion of Mexico. Christianity wins its prosperity by cutting the throats of its fellow men. At such a price the Hindoo will not have prosperity”.

Vivekananda shares with Bankim Chandra, regarding the real meaning of the injunctions given in shastras and scriptures. According to Vivekananda the highest aim of all disciplines, all spiritual paths, is the attainment of the knowledge of Atman. Selfless service for the good of others ensures for the vision of all beings as the ‘Self’. This is the realisation of the Atman which is Absolute. The Samadhi described in the scriptures is very hard to attain. The Shastras say that self – sacrifice can only lead to the state of
Jivanmukti ...... “Freedom while living”. To put in the words of Vivekananda in this context, “Otherwise there would be no need on the part of the Shastras to teach us a separate path of religious practice called the Karma Yoga”. (19)

This view of desire less work is the fundamental teaching of Bhagavadgita. If we think that the rites and rituals of the Vedas are true nature of work, then we cannot arrive at any meaningful idea of this virtue. Bankim Chandra observes that the Hindus are fortunate in getting this Doctrine of self-less work. But it has never brought much good to them because they have failed to understand its true significance. For him, perhaps the author of the Vishnu Purana wrote two stories to illustrate the consequences of two different types of worship. To obtain the superior position Dhruva worshipped Vishnu with desire and he attained the superior position in the world. While Prahlada’s worship was desire less. It was thus devotion which made him to obtain liberation. (20) His devotion to Vishnu is nothing but a now to do good to others.

So says the Gita: “The person who is wise, abandons both vice and virtue in this mortal world. So you be attached to the yoga. Skilful doing of work is yoga”. (50- The Gita /2).

It is true that our knowledge of the worthiness of the world has its English origin. But according to Bankim Chandra, English education has actually made the Indian half-baked. The partially English educated ...... ‘the worthless young Bengal’ have cast off their own religion. They have on the contrary, taken to the bad habits. The so called educated do not understand the hearts of the uneducated. He also asserts that the first necessity is to culture the faculties of knowledge. Since without acquiring knowledge other faculties cannot be cultured. Without knowledge one is deprived from knowing and worshipping God regularly. In ‘Vivid Prabanda’, Bankim Chandra writes with agony in ‘General Education’:

“Everyone ........ were taught that religion is eternal and divine, that self-seeking is unworthy, that life is for others, that God exists and creates, maintain and destroys the universe, that vice and virtue exists, that vice is punished and virtue rewarded, that one’s life is not for oneself but for others, that non-violence is the highest duty and the good of others the highest task ........ where has this education gone ?..........” (21)

Regarding the present system of English education Vivekananda holds a similar
view like Bankim Chandra. Vivekananda often observed that by education he does not mean the present system. It is something in the line of positive teaching. Mere book learning will not do. We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased. Religion must help one to expand the intellect and also to stand on one’s feet. Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda have understood the vision of a glorious ancient civilisation of India. Though brought up under the impact of European culture and out look, unlike the Derozians, always attempted to re-enact modern Indian society on the glorious past. As for Vivekananda, vedanta is more practical than every other science. With its scientific and an inspiring interpretations of life’s problem, alone can give India its glorious past. To this view, we can refer to the letter written to Alasinga: “The dry abstract Advaita must become living ....... poetic ...... in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology ......”(22)

Both Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda have sailed against the trend of sociocultural temperament of the 19th century. The Brahmo ways of interpreting Hinduism has satisfied intellectual curiosity to a certain extent. But it failed to answer the deeper religious inquiries. Naren, while as a young boy, saw hope for a modernized Hinduism in the doctrines of Brahmo Samaj. With characteristic energy and enthusiasm, Naren identified himself with a branch of the Samaj led by Siva Nath Sastri and Vijay Krishna Goswami. Like every other ‘Young Bengal’, he too accepted the doctrine of a formless God with attributes. But unlike many other Brahmos, Naren desired to see God face to face.(23) Perhaps this was the turning point in his life when Naren met with the Great Master, ...... Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. Bankim Chandra too had a similar occasion to meet the Great Master. But Bankim Chandra never like Vivekananda earnestly desired for spiritual enlightenment. Unlike Bankim Chandra, for Vivekananda, ‘religion was of as little use as intellectual learning if it did no bring him into direct contact with the very heart of reality’.(24) But the meeting with the great master perhaps had a very force-full effect on Bankim Chandra. The conversation between Ramakrishna and Bankim Chandra will establishes this view.(23)

Moreover Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra are not arm chair idealist. Both are social - reformists with the vent of realistic attitude in their approaches. To such a view.
we can cite Vivekananda’s ‘Practical Vedanta’. *Being an apostle, he never calls it a religion or God which cannot wipe the widow’s tear. Again religion is not confined to books. These are the two sublime truths which he tried to reconcile actively in future.* Bankim Chandra also being a novelist, *often tried to illustrate the facts of life in his Novels*. The famous line in the novel ‘Bishabriksha’...... “Amara bishabriksha samapta karilam, varsa kari griha griha amrita phaliba,” aims at the uprising of the whole Hindu society and as such its awakening for the country and Humanity. *Moreover to deal with the subject matter of Humanity, Bankim Chandra has given its interpretation in many of his essays and novels*. In his essay title “Manusatya Ki ?”(26) Bankim Chandra deals very extensively with humanity, ‘which is the result of selfless love and harmonization of all the Faculties of the body and mind. Hence Kamalakanta observes that there is no other source of eternal happiness in human life except making others people more happy. To make no distinction between the self and others, is true knowledge. ‘Love is all pervading in this world ......... God is love.’ ‘Love is the song of life in my ears now’. Let that great song be sung in harmony in the heart of man till eternity ......... In the epilogue of Anandamath, Bankim Chandra said, “The knowledge of the inner self, is the major part of the ‘Sanatan Dharma’ (Hindu religion). But if the knowledge of the external world does not come first then there is no possibility of acquiring self – knowledge .......”(27)

*Bankim Chandra’s work may be said to be a continuous protest against Hindu orthodoxy.* This protest against orthodoxy represent both Rammohun and Debendranath Tagore. The worship of the formless of Rammohun has never been accepted by Bankim Chandra. Debendranath has reformed the idolatrous religion of the Hindus. By abolishing the importance of the Puranas, he tried to encourage the ‘Vedantic Dharma’ based on the Jnana marga of the Upanishad. This philosophy ultimately shaped the Brahma dharma of Debendranath. Unlike Debendranath, Bankim Chandra has tried to find out the essence of the Puranas and the activism of the Bhagabdagita. The action preached in the Gita is the ‘Law of Life’. There cannot be a moment without performing any action.(28)

From the writing of Bankim Chandra ....... ‘The Adi Brahma Samaj and The Naba Hindu Sampraday’ reveals the fact that he has never supported the interpretation of the Brahma religion. Bankim Chandra writes that he has been attached by the members of the Adi Brahma Samaj. They have condemned him as an atheist and a vulgar follower of
Comte. In Nabajiban and Prachar he writes regularly in favour of the Hindu religion. But the religion has proved to be unacceptable to the members of the Samaj. To this attack of the Adi Brahma Samaj, Bankim Chandra opines with lamentation......

He has great respect for the members of the Adi Brahma Samaj. But controversies will only hinder the progress. ‘If there is mutual help then even the most humble can do something great.\(^{(29)}\)’

Bankim Chandra in his philosophy has never aimed at atheism. For him any system of religion which does not believe in God is only an imperfect religion. In this respect he talks like a theist. His theism is justified by reason and hence liberal. Like Vivekananda he holds that even personal mukti is selfish desire. Everything that is derived for personal benefit is transitory. ‘Vedic ritual or the ritual practised with some desire is not dharma’.\(^{(30)}\) The central thesis of Bankim Chandra’s religious philosophy is to reveal the lofty philosophy and aspiration of Vaishnavism. The living religion springing eternally from this sectarian philosophy is misunderstood by the people of Bengal of the 19th century. Being a religious philosopher he has found out that self-subsisting essence of religion lies in Vaishnava Dharma. Of course Bankim Chandra is never determined by the rigid sectarianism. Vaishnavism for him is never a creed but a philosophical approach towards religious life. The rational theism has made Bankim Chandra to explore the essence of Vaishnava Dharma.

Consequently he proclaims: The Vaishnava Dharma recited by Prahlad is the best of all the dharma. This is the essence of dharma, so it is present in every pure dharma. Christianity, Brahmanism is a part of this Vaishnav dharma. Whether we call Him God or Allah or Brahman, we call that Jaganath Vishnu. One who has known the omniscient and blissful Supreme Intelligence, existing in every creatures as the inner spirit, is a Vaishnav and a Hindu. He is the worst ‘Mlechcha’ who restricts himself only with external observances of religion. By his touch a Hindu loses his Hinduism.\(^{(31)}\)

In ‘Krishna Charitra’, Bankim Chandra writes about his intension of interpreting and explaining the human nature of Krishna and not to prove the godliness. Seeley in his book, ‘Ecce Homo’, ...... ‘Behold the Man’, tried to set the example for his doctrine of culture with proper reasoning. Hence making religion free completely from mysticism and supernaturalism. Seeley in the book, portrayed ‘Christ’ as an Ideal man, confronting with
the classical belief, wished to see the man in the light of modern outlook which never pleased the Orthodox Christians. Similarly Bankim Chandra’s interpretation of Krishna as an ideal man never pleased the followers of Vishnu.

Many critics observe that Bankim Chandra’s ‘Krishna’ is a theory in human form and has been created by the blending incisive reasoning power with inventive imagination. This view is akin to Tagore’s opinion that the hero of the book ‘Krishna Charitra’ is not Krishna, but its chief leader is ‘independent thinking, active faculties of the mind’. Tagore said that Krishna which Bankim Chandra was in search of, was the product of his own desire: ‘He was frantically in search of an ideal which has achieved perfection by the true and harmonious cultivation of all the faculties of the mind, whom he got as a doctrine in his doctrine of religion, he had a great eagerness to know him living in corporeal frame in the pages of history. The man Bankim Chandra was in search of had no flow in him anywhere, all the faculties of his mind are perfectly harmonious, in other words he is a theory in human form’. Akshay Kumar Dutta Gupta in spite of its scholarly discussion about Bankim Chandra writes that the devotion preached by him is an intellectual activity. To quote him, “Bankim Chandra could not reach that level of pure and sublime devotion which lies above all manners of followings of God, which Sri Gouranga practised himself and preached others. In the language of the Vaisnabas he, at best, could reach the stage of tranquil bliss but could not rise above it. The devotion preached by Bankim was mostly intellectual activity”.

Here, with this opinion of Akshay Kumar Dutta, we can add that Bankim Chandra like a religious philosopher is trying to understand the essential truth of Vaishnava Philosophy. Unlike a theologian, whose main objective is to justify religious ideals from within, Bankim Chandra is rationalising every aspects of Vaishnava Dharma. According to him it is only Vishnu who is perfect and has developed all the faculties in every respect. To quote Bankim Chandra, “It is there in the essence of Anusilan dharma that there cannot be humanity without surrendering every faculties to God. This is true surrender to Krishna, this is real Nishkam Karma. This is permanent happiness. This is at the end Chitta Suddhi. The characteristic of this is ‘Bhakti, Preeti and Santi’. This is dharma. Beside this there is no dharma. I am teaching you this”. 

Unlike Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda agrees that religion, in Vedanta philosophy
is realisation, which gives 'religion its substance. The simple and bold words of Vivekananda are that we have to find out the truth for ourselves with reason. This is realisation. The ideal religion is the harmonious balance of four directions. This religion is attained by yoga ....... union. Vivekananda gives us a message which transcends the limit of any so - called “established religion or cultural tradition”. Every creed is the endeavour of humanity to realise the infinity of self which lies in the great future. His religious philosophy uproots all kind of sectarianism. This is the ‘touch – stone’ of Vivekananda in being a theologian. Religion is synonymous with universalism of the spirit. As it follows, ‘The greatest name man every gave to God is Truth. Truth is the fruit of realisation therefore seek it with the soul........Religion is one, but its application must be various. Let each one, therefore, give his message, but not find defects in other religions........’ (36)

Henceforth neither Vivekananda nor Bankim Chandra denounce other religions as false. Both of them looked upon Hinduism as broad enough to include every religions. For Bankim Chandra Vaishnava Dharma is (he best of all religions. Vivekananda makes the most significant remark :Hindu philosophy and religion are so broad and so rationally catholic as to have in them the power to exalt and to harmonise all ideas of God and to human spirituality. (37)

Again both Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra reject dualism which is the general trend of religion. Vivekananda’s claim that the dualists believe that God is personal and has qualities. But He is devoid of body. According to him the ordinary man cannot think of anything which is not concrete. He naturally likes to cling to that which his intellect can grasp. This is the religion of the masses all over the world. To him, the Advaita has no quarrel with the duality. For the dualist, God is outside the universe while for the Advaitist God is present in one’s soul. He is nearest of the near. A religious man finds no discrimination in the thoughts and philosophy of other religion. He develops tolerance to embrace all creeds such as the Shaktas, the Vaishnavas, the Brahmos, the Mohammedans and the Christians. But one must realise the principles of that very religion. The best cited illustrious life of such a view is Sri Ramakrishna. (38)

The dualistic view of Bankim Chandra is akin to Vivekananda. He holds that the God of the Christian is beyond the world ....... entirely separated from nature. To love
such a God is to love a temporal kind for He is just like a mighty monarch. God, in Bankim Chandra’s conception is not the external God of Christian monotheism. It is the qualified monistic trend of Vedanta philosophy which dominates the religion and philosophy of Bankim Chandra. To him God represents the ideal of perfection since all round development of every qualities is not found in man. Hence Dharma when it is related to the Absolute or Unconditioned God of the Vedanta is immature. Bankim Chandra’s feeling towards Radhanath, illustrates his feelings towards the personal God. This has been described by Chandra Nath Basu in his memoirs:

"...........Bankim Chandra loved to speak about this idol very much. He used to say, ‘He (the idol) brings all bliss to our family, removes all our sufferings. He listens to all our prayers, keeps all our childish demands ....... we always look to Him in times of sickness, sorrow and trouble, we only look for him, He loves us deeply’. God is thus the all pervading ‘Personal Being’, who is the supremely perfect representation of human possibilities. God in Hinduism embraced love for every creatures. God pervades all the creatures and is the soul of all creatures. We admit that achievement of God is happiness itself. God Himself is great joy and bliss. But the external world is not separated from God. Pleasure lies in one’s own self and not dependent on anything external. The person who does not understand this deep teachings of the Gita, consider it to be an ascetic philosophy. Every happiness of life can be truly enjoyed when the passions and desires of the senses are restrained."

Unlike Bankim Chandra the essence of Vivekananda philosophy is Monism i.e. Non-duality of Brahman. In Advaitism he points out that there is no Jivatma. It is only a delusion. In Davaitism, there is Jiva infinitely distinct from God. Within our consciousness we are all Dualist. Beyond that we are all Advaitists. Vivekananda like Johan Stuart Mill admits that a personal God cannot be demonstrated. He is the higher reading of the impersonal that the human intellect can reach. The Vedas in the view of Vivekananda, contains timeless truth. All religions and metaphysical notions are inherent in Vedanta. Thus makes the most significant remark:

The doctrines of duality, qualified monism and monism are but three successive stages in man’s spiritual progress. Hinduism is the form which Vedanta has assumed as the final product of Indian belief and practices. Dualism is its first stage. Christianity and
Islam are also dualistic faith and as such expressions of the Vedantic truth shaped by particular cultures in historic times. Buddhism on the other hand is an embodiment of non-duality or yogic consciousness.\(^{(42)}\)

The ultimate intention of both Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra is to enlighten the essence of humanity present in Hinduism. Bankim Chandra’s introduction of the non-human element reflects the humanity of the 19th century. The 19th century positivism has preached that the only positive faith, faith in a God of whom we are certain ....... is the worship of humanity. Humanity in the concrete is present before us. So there is no necessity to seek after strange Gods. Humanism is one’s virtue. This virtue is associated with one’s duty. Like Debendra Nath, for Bankim Chandra also ‘to bear the burden of the responsibility of life with devotion is true humanity.’\(^{(43)}\)

Bhabatosh Dutta observes in this context, ....... In his constant search to find out the real meaning of life, Bankim Chandra has arrived at a conclusion which has two aspects. The first, ‘surrendering of all faculties to God is Bhakti’. The second ‘Without Bhakti there is no humanity’. From these two-fold conclusions Bankim Chandra realises his Ideal Manab-dharma (Humanism). His Manab-Dharma has a culminating influence on individual, Society and God. Everything has just become one. This is result of logical thinking and not supernatural mysticism.\(^{(44)}\)

Vivekananda’s humanism is based on the principle of Advaita Philosophy. If there is anything, opines he, it is only humanity. We see that according to him, we should worship man because God is manifested in him. He has visualised that Humanism consists in the worship of every man as the living God ....... “Thou art all that exists; a wonderful living God who is the only fact in the universe.”\(^{(45)}\) It is better to worship man instead of worshipping idols and images. In many lines of Rabindranath we come across a similar idea that God is to be found in our daily communion with other beings, that one must go to the market place to find them: “On the way to the market place shall I meet you”.\(^{(46)}\) At the end of his life Tagore writes a poem in which he depicts the ‘Super Human Being’ who is not an individual but ....... Indivisible Formless Human Truth.

In Radhakrishnan also true humanism looks upon religion as a natural development of a really human life. It also reveals that beyond the apparent man lies the deeper self ....... the existence of a spiritual presence. As he writes: True humanism tells
us that there is something more in man than is apparent in his ordinary consciousness, something which frames ideals and thoughts, a finer spiritual presence, which makes him dissatisfied with mere earthly pursuits. The one doctrine that has the longest intellectual ancestry is the belief that the ordinary condition of man is not his ultimate being that he has in him a deeper self.\(^{(47)}\)

Though both Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra have given pivotal position to man in their scheme of religious thinking yet it will be unfair to equate these two humanistic gospels. Bankim Chandra’s humanism like Comte is based on positivistic philosophy. But Bankim Chandra has not followed Comte in totality.\(^{(48)}\) It is only the similarity in approach to religious question that has influenced Bankim Chandra with Comte’s ‘Religion of Humanity’. We can say that Bankim Chandra has never encouraged atheism in his religion like Comte. It is of the nature of ‘Theistic Humanism’ which he asserts in the treatise Dharmatattwa. Bhabotosh Chattopadhyaya observes that Bankim Chandra has mentioned three steps in the teaching of Comte. They are Providential, Spiritual and Scientific. At the third i.e. at the stage of science, man understands the futility and uselessness of spiritual discussion or the discussion of the Final Cause. In the opinion of Comte only direct experience is the basis of knowledge and science is the chief support of human life. Everything in this universe obey certain specific laws and the chief objective of science is to find out those laws.\(^{(49)}\)

In this context, thus we may further observe that the positivistic humanism of Bankim Chandra differs from the spiritualistic humanism of Vivekananda. Humanity for Vivekananda is immortality and we are all immortal as parts of the whole. The truly spiritual see spirit as spirit and not as matter. The essence of Humanism as interpreted by him can be well cited in this expression. “…….. Christianity teaches us to love our neighbours as we should wish them to love us ; Hinduism asks us to love them as ourselves, in fact to see ourselves in them”\(^{(50)}\). While Vivekananda’s spiritualistic humanism is determined by the Upanishadic dictum ……… ‘So Ham’ ! i.e. ‘I am Brahman, I am Brahman’. To quote him thus, “This intense longing ……… becoming mad after realizing God or getting the knowledge of the self is real spirituality”.\(^{(51)}\) Bankim Chandra’s spiritualistic humanism is determined by Personal Pantheism ……… ‘Love for all that exists, as God pervades in everything. The application of the new humanistic conception
of Bhakii as to surrender all the faculties to God is the clarion call of his religious thought.

Bankim Chandra also has taken pain of making hairsplitting analysis in his work ‘Krishna-Charitra’ to establish the historical background of Krishna. He sketches Krishna as the ideal man, the best of all men ...... but nonetheless man only and not God. In his view the religion implicit in the Hindu scriptures is ‘spoken by Krishna’, who in his conception is manavadharmavalambi ...... ‘one who has accomplished all deeds through human capacity’.

The religion propounded by Krishna is a man-made religion, a religion directed with self-less desire. Unlike the Vedic religion this religion is formulated for the well being of the society. Bankim Chandra’s message in this context is very significant. To quote him, “You merely know Krishna of Jayadeva or at most Krishna of the folk theatre......... You do not know the character of Krishna possessing all the qualities, has been described under these covers .......... Hence he said ......

I incarnate in age after age to protect the good and to destroy the wicked”. Bankim Chandra worships that man who has suppressed the wicked by the strength of his arms, united India by his wisdom and thus preached the doctrine of desire less action. Due to his selfless love for all Krishna could achieve that which is very difficult for all.

Vivekananda too upholds the perfect character of Krishna. For him, Krishna is the embodiment of knowledge, work, devotion, power of concentration and everything. In the crisis of the present world situation, Krishna of Vrindavan can never bring salvation to humanity. “Now is needed the worship of Sri Krishna uttering forth the lion-roar of the Gita, of Rama with His bow and arrows............ Without development of an abundance of Rajas, you have hopes neither in this world nor in the next ......” With the same theme of reference like Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda too further asserts that men worship Perfect man (Incarnations) because the perfect man is the highest reflection of the ‘Infinite Being’ who is both subject and object. So ‘Perfect Man’ are worshipped as God all over the world. But here Vivekananda transcends every limitations unlike Bankim Chandra. Vivekananda states that the incarnations are much higher than all the conceptions of God that you or I can make. In him the circle becomes complete. In him all delusions go away .......... The subject and the object become one.

For Bankim Chandra, God within infinite nature cannot be in the beginning the
ideal of a worshipper. Since we cannot see God so we cannot imitate his manners. We can only think of Him. This is the meaning of worshipping Him. So men who resemble God due to their vast number of qualities can be considered as parts of God. The God-incarnate can be made our ideal. Bankim Chandra thus equates ‘Perfect man’ with God. While in Vivekananda the Incarnation transcends the limits of God. To re-establish the Dharma there comes the ‘Mahapurushas’. The teaching of Krishna, Vivekananda opines, is the doctrine of love for its own sake. As he puts it, “If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of religion, the love of God is its end”.

To Bankim Chandra the liberated man is a man with the nature of God. This liberation is different from the Vedantic conception of liberation. He has never admitted that religion must have for its aim the merging of man in a formless, absolute Brahman. Rather he insists that God has to be seen as dwelling in very creature. One must try to achieve the Ideal representing God. This is moksa. Ultimate liberation lies in achieving the ideal as exposed in the character of Krishna. To express this view of liberation, in Dharmatattwa, he writes:

For the west the aim of anusilan is happiness, the objective of anusilan for the East is mukti. I say in reply, mukti is only a particular condition of happiness. It is fullness and perfection of happiness. If it is so then the objective of Anusilan is happiness.

Vivekananda’s message is very much akin to Bankim Chandra in this respect. To Vivekananda, ‘With us the prominent idea is mukti, with the westerners it is dharma. Dharma makes man to seek for happiness. It is established in work. It impels man to run after for happiness. The East chooses inner illumination and integration as its instrument. The west depends on organization to effect it. It is a worldly search after enjoyments. There is actually no enjoyment in life. Man finds very hard to learn this old teaching. It is the liberated person according to Vivekananda, who can aim to put the Vedanta teaching into action. Liberation means entire freedom, freedom from the bondage of good as well as from the bondage. The state when the evil has vanished and yet the body remains, the Vedantists call the ‘Jivanmukti’ — the living freedom. When the Vedantist realises his own nature, the whole world gets vanish for him. The same world gets free from every misery. ‘The prison of misery has become changed into Sat, Chit, Ananda.
......Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute ...... and the attainment of this is the goal of the Advaita Philosophy'.

According to Vivekananda, worship is talking to God. The Vedanta says that there is nothing that is not God. The only God to worship is the soul of every living body. This is the practical aspect of all worship. But Bankim Chandra like an ethnologist, holds that worship enables us to develop culture. Nature is none-else than God Himself. So to worship Nature is to worship God. Every Hindu festivals according to Bankim Chandra has no religious element in them in the beginning. But gradually they have assumed the shape and adopted the symbols of the worship of particular gods.

The injunctions of the seers given in the scriptures: To restrain the senses must become the living principles of life. But Bankim Chandra admits that the best application of this unique philosophy must be done living within the social life only. He has vehemently objected the traditional meaning of ‘Sannyasa’ giving up action. For him life becomes meaningful not by renouncing it but by following the path of renunciation and Shraddha. ‘True renunciation is giving up action with desire’. To make his philosophy more meaningful for the well-being of society, Bankim Chandra significantly remarks as: Self – preservation, preservation of the friends and relatives and defence of one’s own country are as much my duty as to have a feeling of equality with all the creatures. Moreover defence of the country is necessary for the preservation of the world too.

Vivekananda like Bankim Chandra observes that unless there is true devotion and firmness and shraddha (faith) mind can never turn to God. It is true for both Sannyasins and householders. But unlike, Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda opines that heroes are ready to renounce the worldly life guided by the senses. Profound mysteries of life can be known only through Vairagyam renunciation. The spiritualistic perspective has made him to conclude that progress of every nation must depend on the spiritual aspect of life.

For Vivekananda religion is a question of being and becoming. It must be a living principle in life. While for Bankim Chandra Anusilan of Dharma binds together humanity. It is the Jnana accompanied by Karma makes us to understand the bhakti of Bhagavadgita. The teaching of the Gita is the most perfect dharma for man-kind. Bankim Chandra chose the Bhagavadgita alone to base his doctrine of Anusilan Dharma. Every activism of
Bankim Chandra's religious philosophy is guided by the unique religion of the Gita. The new interpretation of the Gita as a gospel of activism has been accepted as the central doctrine of Hindu Ethics. This has been the general trend of the philosophical efforts of Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi. This new movement of thought has been started by Bankim Chandra and ultimately traced to Vivekananda in completeness.

Vivekananda on the other hand has also observed that it is only the pure Upanishadic religion that he has gone preaching in the world. After realizing one's identity with Brahman through meditation a person sees Brahman or God in everything. It was Ramakrishna, thus Vivekananda has opined (in the nineteenth century) who successfully accomplished in a complete reconciliation of every sects of religion. It has been very aptly said that Vivekananda is a commentator on Sri Ramakrishna. But the commentator with his giant intellect and profound understanding made such distinctive contributions that his commentary becomes itself a philosophy.

Hence in the midst of every identical significances and diversities both Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra hold with high esteem:

The reconciliation of the different paths of religion and work without desire are the two postulates for mankind ...........

As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.
REFERENCE AND NOTES


2. S. Radhakrishnan : The Hindu View of Life P - 4


4. Bankim Rachanavalil Vol. II. Part VI, Chap VI

   In Vedic Literature, Bankim Chandra writes, ‘The name Veda was given to the literature then existing, after it had been classified, arranged and adopted by the Aryan community as the sole subject of study.

5. Selections From The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda P - 10

6. Bankim Rachanvali Vol. II. P. 734

7. Op cit P. 806

8. Op cit P. 571

9. Rakhal Chandra Nath : The New Hindu Movement P - 75

10. Talks with Swami Vivekananda P - 28

11. Marie Louise Burke : Swami Vivekananda in the West Vol. I. P. 118 - 12

12. Sri Aurobindo : The Foundations of Indian Culture P - 138


   Robert Audi.


17. C.f. To Mr. Hastie, Bankim Chandra writes ..........

   “........ He will fail in arriving at a correct comprehension of Hinduism, as ... I say it most emphatically ....... as every other European who has made the attempt has failed. And if he thinks that his eloquence alone will enable him to demolish the oldest and the most enduring of all religious system without a correct knowledge of its doctrines ........ why, I can only wish for an Indian Servants to record his achievements”.

   The Statesman, Oct, 16, 1882. Sahitya Samsad P - 205
C.f. The old legend stating the advice of Narada to Vyasa who was disturbed in spite of his explanation of the abstruse Vedas in an easily comprehensible manner for the benefit of mankind. The sage of heaven, Narada, advised him, "Preach devotion in the world which is the soul of religion", and vanished. It is said that Vyasa then composed the Bhagavad and the Bhagavadgita and also portrayed what is ideal devotion in one or two Puranas. For this reason some people think that the Mahabharata was composed before the Gita.

Bankim Rachanavali Vol. II P. 667

21. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee Sociological Essays (Trans. & Ed.)
S. N. Mukherjee P. 79


23. Marie Louise Burke : New Discoveries (His Prophetic Mission) PP. 3-4
Detail analysis is made in the chap. ‘Concept of Religion, In the thoughts of Vivekananda’


25. C.f. The conversation that occurred between the two thinkers as depicted in 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna' (Trans : Swami Nikhilananda) P. 669

Note: - Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was deeply impressed by a poem of Dinabandhu Mitra, ‘Manabcharitra’ written when he was very young. Part of the poem is quoted in the book ‘Bankim Chandra Srijan O Brikhan’ by Bhabotosh Chattopadhya P. 48

27. Bankim Rachanavali Vol. I

28. Dharmatattwa Chap. XX

29. Bankim Rachanavali Vol. II P. 542

30. Op cit P. 564

32. Rabindra Rachanavali, (ed.) Birth Centenary
   Vol. 13, P.-926
33. Op cit
   PP.-932-33
34. Bhabatosh Dutta : Chintanayak Bankim Chandra
   P.-72
35. Bankim Rachanavali
   Vol. II. P.-560
36. Complete Works
   Vol.6. PP.-82-83
37. Ibid
   Vol. 3. P.-172
38. Talks with Swami Vivekananda
   P.-39
39. Bhabatosh Chattopadhaya : 'Srijan O Brikhan'
   PP.-3-4
40. Bankim Rachanavali : Bhagabadgita
   PP.-673-74
41. Complete Works
   Vol. 6. P.-122
   Vol 2 P-157
43. Bankim Rachanavali :
    ‘Manusatya Ki ?’
   Vol 2
44. Bhabatosh Dutta : Bangali Manab Dharma
   P.-56
45. Complete Works
   Vol. 2. P.-320
46. Gitanjali, Bengali (8th ed.)
   P.-97
47. S. Radhakrishnan : Eastern Religion and Western Thought
   P.-25
48. C. f. Bankim Chandra writes that Comte and his disciples have failed to go beyond
    the laws which govern the universe. This is atheism. The atheistic view was formu
    lated by the author of Sankhya Pravachana Sutras who wrote, ‘Not only do we not
    know that God exists, but He cannot exist. This is strictly speaking atheism’.
    Bankim Chanavali, Sahitya Samsad
    P.-267
49. Bhabatosh Chattopadhaya : Srijan O Brikhan
    PP.-7-8
50. Complete Works
    Vol. 6. P.-107
51. Op cit
    P.-457
52. Bankim Rachanavali : ‘Krishna –Charitra’
53. Op cit ‘Dharmattwa’, ‘What is Humanity’
    Chap IV
54. Loc. Cit.
55. Talks with Swami Vivekananda
    P.-22
56. Complete Works
    Vol. 3 P.-9
57. Marie Louise Burke : New Discoveries
    His Prophetic Mission.
    Vol I. P.-249
58. Bankim Rachanavali
    Vol. II. P.-527
59. Complete Works
    Vol. I. P.-365
60. Ibid
    Vol. 2. P.-521
61. On the Origin of Hindu Festival, Sahitya Samsad

62. C. f. For Bankim Chandra patriotism is to be a substitute for religion. This idea gets developed in his novel Ananda Math. It also becomes the holy scripture in the days of Swadeshi movement. Satyananda emphasizes that his brand of Vaishnavism is only half of the religion. Religion in its completeness must comprehend both aspects of Divinity ....... that of love as well as of to fight against evil.

Bankim Rachanavali: ‘Anandamath’ Vol. 1. Part II. Sec. IV

63. Bankim Rachanavali Vol. II P 598

64. S. C. Chatterjee, ‘Swami Vivekananda’s Neo-Vedantism, (ed.) R. C. Majumder. Centenary Memorial Vol 265


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