CHAPTER X

Vivekananda - The Future Man

"If you walked along the seashore you would leave footprints on the sands. But soon the wind and the waves would come and erase them. Not so the case when a prophet walks along the seashores of history. He leaves behind indelible footprints which none of the historical forces and none of the vagaries of fate can efface. For centuries hundreds of thousands of people following his trail attain the fulfilment of their lives. One such trailblazer of recent history was Swami Vivekananda".

"Rooted in the past, and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems; he was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present."

2 Jawaharlal Nehru : Discovery of India, p.400.
It is rightly said, prophets come ahead of their times. Hence persons living at their time do not realise their worth nor do they visualise what they (prophets) are going to do. This is especially true in the case of Swami Vivekananda who said of himself: Had there remained another Vivekananda, he would have understood what I have done. This would be clear when we go through a few revolutionary constructive programmes Vivekananda gave to the nation which have already been embodied in the articles of the constitution of our country.

Soon after Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, Swami Vivekananda travelled all over India and was moved at the pitiable condition of a great nation, "battered, bruised and defeated, laying prostrate under the British boots". But Vivekananda was not an ordinary man who lacked foresight, farsight and insight. He was a prophet in the real sense of the term. So with a prophet's unerring insight he made profound discoveries about India. He pointed out that the main cause of India's degradation lay in the neglect of the masses. This may not appear to be a discovery at all in the present day context. But in the latter half

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of the nineteenth century while Swamiji lived and had his being, it was really a discovery. At that time social reformers kept themselves busy talking about widow marriage etc. But Swamiji went deep into the matter. He was out to root out the problems with which the human society was involved. Criticising the so-called social reformers of his time Swamiji declared:

'Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. But, alas! nobody ever did anything for them. Our modern reformers are very busy about widow remarriage. Of course, I am a sympathiser in every reform, but the fate of a nation does not depend upon the number of husbands their widows get, but upon the condition of the masses. Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature?" This is the crux of the matter. So-called individuality without awareness of their spiritual inheritance is worse than nothing. Swamiji found for that kind of individuality which issues out of Advaita Vedanta. Marxists or socialists talk of political and economic individuality jettisoning its spiritual aspect or context. Result is moral crises in all fields of activities.

Raja Rammohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dayananda Saraswati and

other social reformers of the second half of the nineteenth century, were all great men in their respective fields. But none have said — Here is the hub of the wheel of India's misery. So it was left to Swami Vivekananda to correctly diagnose the source of the power of the nation which has been forgotten for long by those who derive strength from that source. To quote his words —

"Whether the leadership of society be in the hands of those who monopolise, or wield the power of richer or arms, the source of its power is always the subject masses. By so much as the class in power severs itself from this source, by so much is it sure to become weak. But such is the strange irony of fate, such is the queer working of Māyā, that they from whom this power is directly or indirectly drawn, by fair means or foul — by dāna, stratagem, force, or by voluntary gift — they soon cease to be taken into account by the leading class".

"Our aristocratic ancestors went on treading the common masses of our country under-foot, till they became helpless, till under this torment the poor, poor people nearly forgot that they were human beings. They have been compelled to be merely hewers of wood and drawers of water for centuries, so much so, that they are made to believe that they are born

as slaves, born as hewers of wood and drawers of water.\

"The poor, the low, the sinner in India have no friends, no help – they cannot rise, try however they may. They sink lower and lower everyday, they feel the blows showered upon them by a cruel society, and they don't know whence the blow comes. They have forgotten that they too are men. And the result is slavery."

As a result of social tyranny and neglect, the conscience of India was suppressed for centuries. This forgotten conscience of India found its expression in the following words of Swamiji –

'I consider that the greatest national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for.'

A study in depth of certain human trends of today will reveal Vivekananda to be more a wave of the future than of the past. The revolutionary constructive programmes, Vivekananda gave to the nation have already become articles of

the constitution of the country. The voltage of his thoughts was so tremendous that men and women arose by millions to give shape of action to his thoughts and millions more continue to rise.

The Charter of Rights and the fundamental rights of the Individuals as incorporated in the constitution are basically designed upon the spirit, Vivekananda put forth. Our national programme aims at social justice and social equality. In fact greater emphasis has been laid on the upliftment of the masses - the scheduled caste and tribals and backward sections of society. More to say the symbol of Asoke Chakra which is our national insignia makes us turn back to Swamiji and his creed of humanism and humanitarianism as drawn from Buddha's humanism. To quote Swamiji once more -

In his great appreciation of Buddha, Swamiji drew extensively from Buddha's thought of social activities and creed of Karma. In fact Swamiji was thrilled and overwhelmed by the life and teaching, love and charity and selfless service as manifested in Buddha's life. It is not a strange coincidence but it is a direct illumination from Swamiji's writing that inspired our great leaders like Subhash Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru and impelled them to adopt Asoke Chakra as National symbol. Buddha and Buddhism have been the spiritual force

behind our nationhood, and social and national programme. Even in our international deal as well it serves our motivation. But Swami was the foremost personality who salvaged Buddha's historic role in India's cultural build-up and recreating its cultural heritage. Forethought of Swami and his vision of India to be, are all assuming shape and image through our national aims and aspirations, and political social and economic planning.

In our adoption of 'Secularism' and 'Panch-Sheel' or five principles - there is the refraction of Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda doctrine of religious impartiality or identity of all religions - "As many are the religions - so many are the paths that lead to heaven" God.

Swami's speech in Chicago - was a clarion call proclaiming the brotherhood of mankind. That trumpet sound was not a propagandist's blaze or a mere congregational convention or ceremonial decorum. It is deeply rooted in his philosophy of life - Advaita Vedanta. It came from the very abyss of heart, deepest understanding and realisation; and so the effect was so startling and electrifying.

If the universe wants to survive and live in amity and perfect co-operation, mankind will have to be imbued with
the spirit of Vedantic principle and Buddhists' creed of humanism and humanitarianism. Swami's dream gave direction to the concept of U.N.O. and other fraternal organisations.

If the world wants to establish lasting peace, the path lays through Vedantic and Buddhistic concept of life, not by eliminating religion but by embracing religion, shorn of all false ritualism, mystic rites and magic art.

Vivekananda is the foremost man who could dovetail science with religion in his vision of life. "The special contribution of the Orient to World-culture is religion; the special contribution of the Occident to World-culture is science. In Swami Vivekananda's view the present age needs the union of the two; this will bring about a unique civilisation. He has explained that there is no contradiction between science and religion, and that modern science has strengthened the position of religion rather than weakening it*. Science shall be the handmaiden of religion but not an antagonistic force pulling mankind in opposite directions. Here the controversy between the closed world (Communism) and free world (as in U.S.A.) gets resolved, and a new synthesis is made that will bring perpetual peace, progress and high morality. Yet it is a society not bereft of religion - but religion serving as the basic spirit and source of inspiration for the entire activities of mankind.
Here is the gem-like quality of Vivekananda's message which accepts all that is good in all activities of man, rejects what is base and derogatory to the soul and soul-power, moulds and reshapes the entire structure of society and which preached openness of heart, mind and brain and soul, which urges upon mankind to undertake newer investigation of nature and natural forces, scientific advancement, and exploration of fresh ground, a perpetual striving for opening up newer vista of life. Life is so sweet, so fresh, so various, so enervating, but it must be constantly nourished and nurtured by Vedântic principle. Here is the eternal spirit of mankind. Vivekananda is the epitome of that spirit. Here is the full man - future man. He inheres in the past, carries the present and directs to future.

In Buddha Swamiji visualised a heart as wide as the ocean. Throughout his life Buddha preached the good of all living beings including men and women with a heart as wide as the ocean. Hence Buddha was a living example to him. He had great admiration for Buddha and he received inspiration from the life and teaching of Buddha. Sister Nivedita records an incident which reflects to a great extent the deep reverence that Swamiji had for the Buddha -

'That was a great hour indeed, when he spoke of
Buddha, for catching a word that seemed to identify him with its anti-Brahminical spirit, an uncomprehending listener said, "Why, Swami, I did not know that you were a Buddhist!" "Madam", he said rounding on her, his whole face aglow with the inspiration of that man, I am the servants of the servants of Buddha....

.......who was there ever like Him - the Lord - who never performed one action for Himself? With a heart that embraced the whole world ........... so full of pity that He - prince and monk - would give his life to save a little goat? So loving that He sacrificed Himself to the hunger of a tigress? To the hospitality, of a pariah? And blessed him?".

The question arises in some minds, why did Vivekananda talk of untold sufferings of India alone? Did he belong to India alone? In reply we may say that at the time of Swami Vivekananda the problem of the West was not of poverty. So he referred to the untold miseries of Indian masses in which they were involved. Swami Vivekananda's interest was neither national nor international, but universal. As an ideal sannyasin (monk of non-dualistic order) he ever knew in the depth of his heart that he was one with the Infinite; he did not belong to any particular country, nation, or race. On September 9, 1895, he wrote from Paris, "I belong as much to India as

to the world, no humbug about that .............. What country has any special claim on me? Am I any nation's slave?"¹¹
(Letters of Swami Vivekananda, C.W.). After starting the Ramkrishna Mission "for the good of many, for the happiness of many", he wrote from Almora, India, to an American admirer on July 9, 1897, "I must see my machine in strong working order and then knowing for sure that I have put in a level for the good of humanity in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep, without caring what will be next; and may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God, I believe in, the sum-total of all souls - and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship."¹²

"No institution, no environment, stood between him and any human heart. His confidence is that Divine-within-Man of which he talked, was as Perfect, and his appeal as direct, when he talked with the imperialist aristocrat or the American millionaire, as with the exploited and oppressed. But the outflow of his love and courtesy were always for the simple.

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¹² Ibid. GLVII.
"While travelling in America, he had at first in certain Southern towns been taken for a negro, and refused admission to the hotels, he had never said that he was not of African blood, but had as quietly and gratefully availed himself of the society of the coloured race, when that was offered, as did that of the local magnates who hastened round him later, in mortified apology for what they deemed the insult put upon him. 'What! rise at the expense of another!' he was heard to say to himself, long after, when someone referred with astonishment to this silence about his race, 'Rise at the expense of another! I didn't come to earth for that.'

Only the realisation of spiritual oneness with all can develop such universal love. It is bliss and freedom at the same time. Says Vivekananda from his own experience, without:

"We have always heard it preached, 'Love one another'. What for? That doctrine was preached, but the explanation is here. Why should I love everyone? Because they and I are one. Why should I love my brother? Because he and I are one. There is this oneness, this solidarity of the whole universe. From the lowest worm that crawls under our feet to the highest beings that ever lived—all have various bodies, but are the

\[13\] Sister Nivedita, The Master as I saw Him, pp. 218-19.
one Soul. Through all months you eat; through all hands you work; through all eyes you see. You enjoy health in millions of bodies, you are suffering from disease in millions of bodies. When this idea comes and we realise it, see it, feel it, then will misery cease, and fear with it. How can I die? There is nothing beyond me. Fear ceases, and then alone come perfect happiness and perfect love. That universal sympathy, universal love, universal bliss, that never changes, raises man above everything”.

The spiritual oneness of mankind is also the foundation of ethics. As stated by Swami Vivekananda—

"The infinite oneness of the Soul is the eternal sanction of all morality, that you and I are not only brothers - every literature voicing man's struggle towards freedom has preached that for you - but that you and I are really one. This is the dictate of Indian philosophy. This oneness is the rationale of all ethics and all spirituality”.

Swami Madhavananda rightly points out, "though he (Vivekananda) was born in India, he belonged to the whole world and India had no exclusive claim of him. His mission in the East and the West was to rouse men and women to

an awareness of their divine nature and the unity of man, which alone can bring peace to this world, torn with hatred and strife."\(^{16}\) "But everyday my sight grows clearer. What is India, or England, or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called Man."

There is but one basis of well-being, social, political or spiritual - to know that I and my brother are one. This is true for all countries and all people.\(^{17}\) There is no exaggeration to say that Swamiji made no distinction of race, nation, creed, colour, caste or sex. The whole world was his home. He was a world maver. Let us repeat his words again, "What is India or England or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called "Man".\(^{18}\)

There is nothing unnatural on the part of Vivekananda to express his wish in the words: When will that blessed day dawn when my life will be a sacrifice at the altar of humanity?

The increasing number of his disciples, devotees and admirers in the East and the West, his silent influence on thousands of lives all over the world, and his fiery message

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supplying direct and indirect inspiration to hundreds of movements in and outside his own motherland prove the truth of the words he uttered before his death: "It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body - to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God." 19.

For the theoretical justification of his practical life Vivekananda falls back upon Śaṅkara who is an upholder of the doctrine of identity. In fact, in Vivekananda the intellect of Śaṅkara co-existed with the heart of Buddha.

Swamiji's prophecy has come true. What he visualised in Mother Kumarin's temple in a trance to be the cause of India's downfall is now being gradually realised by people today. To quote his words: "In view of all this, especially of the poverty and ignorance, I had no sleep. At Cape Comorin, sitting in Mother Kumari's temple, sitting on the last bit of Indian rock - I hit upon a plan: We are so many Sannyasins wondering about, and teaching the people metaphysics - it is all madness. Did not our Gurudeva 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 under foot.\textsuperscript{20}

Swamiji's great Master Sri Ramakrishna said on his own without ever knowing what Karl Marx said, "Empty stomach and religion go ill together. People must have food. Their minimum wants have to be supplied; otherwise they cannot apply their minds to God".

Vivekananda's second discovery about India was that religion was the backbone of this nation. This would be clear from the following illuminating passages of Swami Vivekananda.

'Within every man, there is an idea; the external man is only the outward manifestation, the mere language of this idea within. Likewise, every nation has a corresponding national idea.\textsuperscript{21}

'........... here in this blessed land, the foundation, the backbone, the life-centre is religion and religion alone.\textsuperscript{22}

'In India, religious life forms the centre, the Keynote of the whole music of national life.\textsuperscript{23}

'For good or for evil, our vitality is concentrated in our religion. You cannot change it. You cannot, destroy it

\textsuperscript{22 & 23} Please see next page.
and put in its place another.\textsuperscript{24}.

'You can work only under the law of least resistance, and this religious line is the line of least resistance in India. This is the line of life, this is the line of growth, and this is the line of well-being in India - to follow the track of religion'.\textsuperscript{25}

When Swamiji talked of religion, he takes it in a special sense meaning thereby spirituality. For him it meant realisation of God. For a Christian or a Muslim, religion means faith in a certain creed and observance of certain religious customs. If he maintains these and lives a tolerably moral life his salvation is guaranteed. But for a Hindu salvation means 'mukti' or liberation, which can be attained only through direct supersensory experience of the ultimate Reality after long strenuous years' of spiritual discipline. Swamiji has taken the word in this sublime sense. This would be clear when we go through the following passages of Vivekananda -

"EACH SOUL IS POTENTIALLY DIVINE. THE GOAL IS TO MANIFEST

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THIS DIVINITY WITHIN, BY CONTROLLING NATURE, EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL. DO THIS EITHER BY WORK, OR WORSHIP, OR PSYCHIC CONTROL, OR PHILOSOPHY — BY ONE OR MORE, OR ALL OF THESE — AND BE FREE. THIS IS THE WHOLE OF RELIGION. DOCTRINES OR DOGMAS; OR RITUALS, OR BOOKS OR TEMPLES, OR FORMS, ARE BUT SECONDARY DETAILS.26.

A modern commentator rightly observed, "The great civilisations of the world do not produce the great religions as a kind of cultural by-product, in a very real sense, religions are the foundations on which great civilisations rest. A society which has lost its religion becomes sooner or later a society which has lost its culture."27. This is a magnificent and startling revelation (long forgotten perhaps) in this materialistic civilisation. It is a fresh remainder to present day India also, which seeks economic emancipation as the Summum Bonum of National existence.

India of the day especially the Government of India and most of the political parties are laying entire stress on the economic salvation of the people. Though Vivekananda also laid stress on the bare necessities of life before religion can take root in the soul, yet he made it amply

27 Christopher Dowson: Inquiries into Religion and Culture, p.295.
clear that culture shall be based on 'religion' which means awareness or consciousness of spiritual existence of all beings. Love and Charity shall generate from that consciousness. The equality of the status of all human beings arises out of this consciousness. Humanism and humanitarianism is an offshoot of this consciousness. Advaita Vedanta is the spring-head of this 'Pragya' or consciousness.

But making secularism the central theme of our national approach the entire gamut of people is led to dark grooves or alley. Socialism which is the other creed of our government is a steam-roller levelling down the entire people in all sphere of existence. Vivekananda who was himself a great 'socialist' - who wanted the poor, the lowly and the base to be lifted up' from the economic quag-mire - who wanted equality of opportunity to be given to all irrespective of caste or creed or religion, never could think of a society which envisage so-called equality of man based upon demolishing caste barrier by artificial and brutal means such as forced inter-marriage or by financial inducement and other 'vulgar' processes. He wanted that all shall be turned into 'Brahmins' - which means imbibing the spirit of Brahmins, acquiring the attributes of Brahmins. That is real culture, that is real religion. It is through this process only upliftment of the society is possible.
Europe and America have no social inequality of the type indicated by our caste system. Yet Europe and America could not find the peace of mind. There is less of the urgency of economic redistribution in those countries yet they are wandering about for peace of mind. Their spiritual consciousness, is also at the lowest ebb. Vivekananda's message of spiritual salvation has equal relevance to the Western World.

The core of Swamiji's message is Advaita Vedanta or religion that looks at the entire humanity as one and which preaches spiritual identity of all created beings with God or soul. Here is the ever-lasting relevance of Vivekananda's message. While we talk of Vivekananda as the man of future world we have in mind this aspect of his thought. Economic salvation might be a possibility through perpetual human endeavour with the application of science and mechanism, but spiritual elevation or God-consciousness may be far-removed from reality. Marxists who claim humanism as the new religion for the new society born of social equality will soon be disillusioned. For, the Marxian humanism can only proceed to a certain stage only. It is soon encumbered by other material and baser qualities - namely, the eternal distrust of his fellow comrades, the love of power, love of supremacy, egoism and egotism, besides lure of luxury and wealth, and attachment for lust and carnal desires. Once it creeps on to human soul,
all his high-sounding glib utterances about socialism and humanism is ship-wrecked. The entire society is thrown back to primitivism. Besides this in-fight within the country itself, there is the other and the greater calamity of international rivalry for domination and world supremacy, colonialism and Imperialism as it manifested so glaringly in this modern world. Great thinkers like Einstein and Bertrand Russell and others cried from the house-tops warning the great powers against the impending annihilation of human race. They suggested a political solution through world Federation. U.N.O. has been ushered in with all fanfare for the solution of conflicting ideals and ideas and for removing economic mal-distribution and mal-adjustment. While these political and economic approaches to lasting peace are all for good, they fall short of the basic spiritual outlook, namely, viewing the entire world as human family. The fountain-head of this outlook is Advaita Vedānta, God-consciousness, identity of God with His created beings. Unless that supreme consciousness dawns on humanity, whatever is done by way of elimination of economic inequality will be simply time-serving, tenuous and trivial.

Vivekananda's message is a beacon light to all. To quote Swami Vivekananda - "No civilisation can grow unless fanaticism, bloodshed, and brutality stop. No civilisation
can begin to lift up its head until we look charitably upon one another; and the first step towards that much-needed charity is to look charitably and kindly upon the religious convictions of others. Nay more, to understand that not only should we be charitable, but positively helpful to each other, however different our religious ideas and convictions may be.²⁸

"Religion is the greatest motive power for realising that infinite energy which is the birthright and nature of every man. In building up character, in making for everything that is good and great, in bringing peace to others, and peace to one's own self, religion is the highest motive power, and therefore, ought to be studied from that standpoint. Religion must be studied on a broader basis than formerly.

"As the human mind broadens, its spiritual steps broaden too. The time has already come when a man cannot record a thought with its reaching to all corners of the earth; by merely physical means, we have come into touch with the whole world; so the future religions of the world have to become as universal, as wide.

"The religious ideals of the future must embrace all that exists in the world and is good and great, and, at the same time, have infinite scope for future development.

"The power of religion, broadened and purified, is going to penetrate every part of human life. So long as religion was in the hands of a chosen few or of a body of priests, it was in temples, churches, books, dogmas, ceremonials, forms, and rituals. But when we come to the real, spiritual, universal concept, then, and then alone, religion will become real and living; it will come into our very nature, live in our every moment, penetrate every pore of our society, and be infinitely more a power for good, than it has ever been before."\(^2\text{9}\)

The central truth of religion is the divinity of man. "The Kingdom of God is within you", says Jesus Christ. To realise this divinity is the goal of spiritual life. In Swami Vivekananda's words, "Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man"\(^3\text{0}\).

The knowledge of this divinity is the secret of man's development both in individual and collective life, secular as well as spiritual. It finds expression in two distinct ways: "I am divine" and "Thou art divine". As a man becomes aware of his own divinity he becomes aware at the same time of the divinity of his fellow-beings. Along with the development of his faith in himself his regard for others develops. His potentialities grow as his self-faith is intensified. His


\(^3\text{0}\) The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol.4, p.358 (Tenth Edition)
capacity for serving his fellow creatures necessarily increases. Says Swami Vivekananda:

"This infinite power 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 of man a God. ............Manifest the divinity within you, and everything will be harmoniously arranged around it." 31

Religion is an attempt of the human soul to transcend the limitations of senses and of mind which are inadequate to comprehend the Reality in full. Such an attempt has been made in all societies and cultures from time immemorial. But only in the Indian culture and society did this endeavour attain the thoroughness and exactness of a science, the reality and pervasiveness of a way of life, in what is known, as Hinduism. The word 'Hinduism' means both philosophy and religion, for us Max Muller has pointed out, the two have blended harmoniously in India alone. Max Muller goes on to say: And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we, who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact

more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not from this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life - again I shall point to India"\(^{32}\).

Life-blood of religion is spirituality. A neglect of this life-blood will virtually lead to the annihilation of a nation.

To quote Swamiji, "When the life-blood is strong and pure no disease germ can live in that body. Our life-blood is spirituality. If it flows clear, if it flows strong and pure and vigorous, everything is right; political, social, any other material defects even the poverty of the land, will all be cured if that blood is pure"\(^{33}\).

Swamiji's prediction has come true. India attained independence thirty years back. But she is facing problems after problems, because it has neglected its life-blood. People have managed to forget Swamiji's word of caution, namely, - "Religion is as the rice and everything else, is like the curries"\(^{34}\).

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32 Max Muller: *India: What Can It Teach Us?*, p. 6.
Had we remembered the timely warning of the great prophet Swami Vivekananda, we would not have been bristled with problems even after thirty years of our independence. To quote his voice of warning -

"Religion and religion alone is the life of India, and when that goes India will die inspite of politics, in spite of social reforms, in spite of Kubera's wealth poured upon the head of everyone of her children." 

In the words of Swami Vivekananda, "Every nation has an ideal which shapes its life and when that is jeopardized for any reason the nation suffers. In India, the life of our nation is based on religion. Any attempt at changing over to a new ideal at the cost of the traditional one will mean the death of the nation. This ideal the nation chose thousands of years ago and it is not possible, to alter it now, just as it is not possible to reverse the current of the river Ganga back to the Himalayas and make it run in a new channel. "After All", Swamiji says, "it is not a bad choice". For centuries the nation has held on to this ideal in weal and woe." 

Speaking about Swami Vivekananda's works for India,


36 Swami Vivekananda : Spiritual ideals for the Modern Man, p.51.
C. Rajagopalachari said, 'Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him we would have lost our religion and would not have gained freedom. We therefore owe everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his faith, his courage, and his wisdom, ever inspire us, so that we may keep save the treasures we have received from him.'

This owning everything to Vivekananda might mean an accountancy with the past. True it is a statement of fact. But this fact continues to unfold itself with a dash in the expanding shares of the future.

Swamiji's third discovery about India is that religion is one, and that is Vedānta. The problem of India cannot be solved unless we apply this life-giving principle of Vedānta to solve her social and national problems. Vedānta is not the pigeon-hole of a single creed into which all minds have to be thrust. There is room in the mansion of Hinduism of all classes of men free, from the lowest peasant having the candest conception of God to the highest mystic who sees God as the uncreated light in his own heart. But this contention will not have ready acceptance from persons hearing them. They would point out the charges against Hinduism. Anticipating the Swamiji observes:

"Thoughtful people within the last few years have seen it (the country's degradation), but unfortunately laid it at the door of the Hindu religion, and to them, the only way of bettering is by crushing this grandest religion of the world. Hear me, my friend, I have discovered the secret through the grace of the Lord. Religion is not in fault. On the other hand, your religion teaches you that every being is only your own self multiplied. But it was the want of practical application, the want of sympathy - the want of heart".\(^38\).

"No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that religion is not in fault, but it is the Pharisees and Sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites, who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny".\(^39\).

"You have the greatest religion which the world ever saw, and you feed the masses with stuff and nonsense. You have the perennial fountain flowing, and you give them ditch-water".\(^40\).


Here Swamiji countered the argument - 'Religion is opium to the people'. Religion offers dignity to fellow-beings, religion makes man God-consciousness, makes him full identity with God. All this insistence on religion is to build up basic moral and spiritual structure of Indian people. Edifice of life - social, economic cannot be created only when spiritual basis, structure and framework is built up.

From what has been said above it is clear that Swamiji looked at religion from a very different angle unlike his contemporaries. Swamiji questions: 'If religion could help a man to get 'mukti' or absolute liberation, could it not help him in solving his daily problems?' In this connection we bear in mind Karl Marx's famous statement - Philosophers have hitherto only tried to explain the world. The real problem is how to change it. Unlike other philosophers of India who used religion mainly to explain away the world, or as the means of escaping from bondage, Swamiji aimed at applying religion to solve the day-to-day problems of man as well. He was the first great Indian thinker of modern times to apply the principles of religion to solving the national problems and making religion a powerful instrument for social change in India.

Swamiji clearly saw that Hinduism had a core of sound spiritual principles based on the Upanishads and the Gita, and that these principles when applied in practical life could solve many of
the national problems. That is why he asked us to go back to the Upaniṣads. He said -

"Go back to your Upaniṣads, the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy - and part from all these mysterious things, all these weakening things. Take up this philosophy; the greatest truths are the simplest things in the world, simple as your own existence. The truths of the Upaniṣads are before you. Take them up, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand." \(^{41}\)

"And the Upaniṣads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energized through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects, to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upaniṣads" \(^{42}\).

The most important life-giving principle of the Upaniṣads, of Vedānta about which Swamiji spoke is the Potential Divinity of the soul.

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Though Vedantic schools differ among themselves regarding the nature of Brahman and the relationship of souls to Brahman, they are one in holding that the ultimate spiritual Reality is Brahman which forms the substratum of the universe and of all individual souls. Every soul is divine or there is divinity in every soul. Only that each individual soul varies in its degree of divine consciousness. Realisation of this divinity is liberation. In Swamiji's words, "Each soul is potentially divine". The implication of the above saying is that every soul has the inherent capacity to realise its divine nature. Evil or bad in man belongs to mind and not to his soul or Atman. The central idea of all schools of Vedanta is that the soul is pure and self-luminous.

The fields of application which Swamiji found for this doctrine, may be generalised into five -

A New Definition of Religion,
A New Existential philosophy of life,
A New Social philosophy for uplifting the Masses,
and the solution of the Caste Problems;
A New philosophical basis for India's National Ideals.

A New Definition of Religion

Swami Vivekananda speaks of the Divinity of man. But
he has not used the word 'divine' in the Christian or Islamic sense of 'God' who is external to the Self. By the expression 'Divinity' or the 'Divine', Swamiji meant Brahman who is identical with self or Ātman. Swamiji has repeatedly pointed out that God is within each one of us. Each one of us is born to rediscover his own God-nature. That is why, he opines 'No man is born into any religion but every man has a religion in his soul'.

'Religion is realisation; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes'.

"If there is but one religion to be true, all the rest must be true ........ All religions are so many stages. Each one of them represents the stage through which the human soul passes to realise God. Therefore, not one of them should be neglected. None of the stages are dangerous or bad. They are good".

According to Swamiji's interpretation of this ancient Vedāntic doctrine, every soul has behind it the infinite power


and glory of the Divine which it is trying to manifest. The main problem in this process of self-manifestation is the removal of obstacles in the form of selfishness and ensuing vices. Ethical life is the removal of these obstacles but is not in itself religion. When the obstacles are removed, Divinity manifests itself more and more and this divine life is true religion.

For this removal of obstacles, for manifesting one's potential divinity, Karma-Yoga, bhakti-yoga and jñāna-yoga are in fact equally efficient.

As has been alluded in the Preamble, in his Neo-Vedānta Swamiji combines jñāna, karma, bhakti and yoga. What he wants is "a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally conducive to action". In his opinion, "all men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work, were equally present in full". A harmonious balance in all these four directions is his ideal of religion. But it should be noted here that although for Swami Vivekananda, an integrated cultivation of all these paths is the ideal of religion, yet he is

ready to admit that pursuit of any one of the paths sincerely and entirely will lead to the ultimate goal of human life, namely liberation.

"Swamiji's definition of religion expresses the traditional Vedāntic view avoiding all the controversies about Dualism, non-dualism etc. It is also a terse formulation of Sri Ramakrishna's concept of vijnana, the integral experience of an enlightened sage that Brahman alone has become the whole universe."

In other words, Swamiji held that all religions are different stages of the development of mind revealing aspects of the realisation of divinity through it. It is in Advaita Vedāntist the full view of that realisation is revealed. When Sri Ramakrishna says - 'As many are the principles, of religion so many are the paths', that lead to God (or Religion), he does not really mean that all religious are alike true. What he expresses is that all religious paths or principles are good as all of them are stages or steps to the full realisation of divinity which is again identified with individual soul. That identification is highest and truest form of religion. That is salvation. Hence salvation is possible even in this life.

The supremest stage of the development of the soul. Realisation of *Savam Kham idam Brahman* - 'the whole universe is Brahman' is only possible for a man whose soul has attained this stage of full identification of one's individual soul with Brahman or Eternal Soul. At this stage only the enlightened can see that entire universe as the manifestation of Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna had this realisation. He passed it off to Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji found justification of this realisation in the Advaita Vedanta in its basic creed free from the tentacles of controversy, and its different ramifications.

**A New Existential Philosophy of Life:**

Swamiji's definition of life, that is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press to down is an expansion of the above-mentioned definition of religion as the manifestation of man's inherent divinity.

Life according to Swamiji is a battlefield and every man has within him enough strength to come out victorious out of this battle. Swamiji's message is a message of hope and strength to all suffering humanity. His doctrine of strength is based on the potential divinity of man. To quote his words,

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"Aye, let every man and woman and child, without respect of caste or birth, weakness or strength, hear and learn that behind the strong and the weak, behind the high and the low, behind every one, there is that Infinite Soul, assuming the infinite possibility and the infinite capacity of all to become great and good. Let us proclaim to every soul - 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached'.

............. Teach yourselves, teach everyone 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, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity". This is the way courage is instilled in man. How different it is from mere physical courage or courage injected or inducted from outside incitement!

Life is basically a series of conflicts, frustrations and sufferings. But we should not brood over past mistakes. The more we brood over past mistakes, the more we deepen and fortify our past 'Samskaras'. That is why Swamiji said:

"The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength. Teach men of the strength that is already within them. Instead of telling them they are sinners,

the Vedanta takes the opposite position, and says, "You are pure and perfect, and what you call sin does not belong to you". Sins are very low degrees of Self-manifestation; manifest your Self in a high degree. This is how Christianity, a great religion differs from the full religion of Advaita Vedanta. There is no inhibition in a Vedanta.

Again by advocating the doctrine of potential divinity of the soul, Swamiji has reinstated the doctrine of Karma in its proper place. Karma is dynamic, soul-stirring and is an agent of revealing the inner soul. Karma is the law of one's being, and hence a powerful means of changing one's future. This is clear from the following passages of Swamiji -

"Therefore, blame none for your own faults, stand upon your own feet and take the whole responsibility upon yourselves. Say, "This misery that I am suffering is of my own doing, and that very thing proves that it will have to be undone by me alone". That which I created, I can demolish; that which is created by some one else, I shall never be able to destroy. Therefore stand up, be hold, be strong .... .........All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves. Therefore, make your own future."Let the dead

past bury its dead". The infinite future is before you, and you must always remember that each word, thought, and deed lays up a store for you, and that as the bad thoughts and bad works are ready to spring upon you like tigers, so also there is the inspiring hope that the good thoughts and good deeds are ready with the power of a hundred thousand angles to defend you always and forever. These are the words of inspiration much more effective a stimulant for action than "Do your duty without regard to consequence" preached by the Gitā.

The Upaniṣads repeatedly point out that the cause of our misery is ignorance of our true nature. Echoing the voice of Upaniṣads, Swami Vivekananda said:

"And the only religion that ought to be taught is the religion of fearlessness. Either in this world or in the world of religion, it is true that fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil. And what causes fear? Ignorance of our own nature." 52

Man's tenure of life from birth to death is a continuous struggle for existence which is extremely painful. But

he can overcome it by constantly thinking about his real nature as pure consciousness and bliss. It is possible to revolutionise one's attitude towards life and remodel one's behaviour pattern. Swami Vivekananda wants us to follow it first. This optimism in Vivekananda's thought-pattern is unique in Indian philosophic thought. It is not running away from life, but acceptance of life with both ends. It is not annihilation of rebirth (as contemplated by Buddha) or holding life as illusion as in Advaita Vedânta by grappling and struggling with life. He said: - "Men are taught from childhood that they are weak and sinners. Teach them that they are all glorious children of immortality, even those who are the weakest in manifestation. Let positive, strong, helpful thoughts enter into their brains from very childhood. Lay yourselves open to these thoughts, and not to weakening and paralysing ones. Say to your own minds, "I am He, I am He". Let it ring day and night in your minds like a song, and at the point of death declare: "I am He". That is the truth; the infinite strength of the world of yours"53.

It is a fact that in order to face the problems of life, we need strength. Swamiji insisted on all-round strength - physical, mental, moral and spiritual for the preservation of

our own culture.

Swamiji, a man of realisation, did not advocate like Buddha annihilation of rebirth as a goal of liberation. This would be clear from the following passages of Swami Vivekananda -

"It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body – to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God".\textsuperscript{54}

"May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls – and above all, may God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship".\textsuperscript{55}

On the other hand, though an exponent of Sāṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, he could not but show deep feeling for the entire human race whom he as an exponent of Sāṅkara was termed as māyā. In this respect he had before him life and teaching of Lord Buddha who preached throughout his life the good of all living beings including men and animals with a heart as

\textsuperscript{55} The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol.5, p.137
wide as the ocean. Vivekananda's philosophy is the outcome of the synthesis of Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara and the great humanism of Buddha. In other words, the bright sun of intellectuality of Śaṅkara has combined with the heart of Buddha. This positive approach to life is a new thought-pattern in Indian philosophy though the seed of which is embedded in the Upaniṣads. It is Vivekananda who expounded, elaborated and applied it in the wider perspective of life. Here is the Neo-Vedāntist that Vivekananda was.

A new philosophy of work:

"The idea of harmony of religions, the divinity of the soul, the oneness of existence, - all take their basis in the vision of the divine in man. The democratic principle of giving value to the individual has its firm roots here."\(^{56}\)

Here is a study in depth. We talk of democracy in terms of equality of right, equality of opportunity, equality, justice - on the political and economic levels. We never place this concept on religious or spiritual concept. Here is Swamiji who placed the concept of democracy, equality, rather identity of all persons basing it on the Advaita philosophy - Oneness of God, divinity in individuals, identity of individuals with God-head. Thus while we harm our fellow brothers or do injustice to him in any way we are hitting ourselves. We are

aiming at God Himself. This is higher, broader and stronger than any concept of democracy based on political, social or economic grounds. It surpassed the bare concept of humanism itself - no matter whether it is Buddhistic in basis or mere humanitarianism in outlook. Here is mingling of heaven with earth. Here is God treading on earth. Here is religion coming to the aid of politicians in contradiction to the theory of Marx. Here is spirituality made practical by Swami Vivekananda. To get that vision, it is not merely our concept of man that must change, but our behaviour too. Sri Ramakrishna said: I now really find that it is the Lord who is moving about in the form of men, sometimes a saint, sometimes a fraud, at other times a knave. But all of them are God and none but God. So I say, God in the form of saints, God in the form of Knave, God in the form of libertine.

Sri Ramakrishna gave the spirit of service through these hints, the detailed work was left to his worthy disciple Swami Vivekananda who gave it a language. Thus Swamiji raised Karma-Yoga to the status of an independent path. Down the ages it was considered to be secondary to Jhāna and Bhakti, inspite of Sri Krishna's clear opinion that through detailed work alone the highest goal could be reached. Not only did Swami Vivekananda consider Karma-Yoga as the religious path
suitable for this age but he exhorted people to adopt it without a shadow of doubt. The life work of Swami Vivekananda is to make spirituality intensely practical.

Here is a re-orientation of Advaita Vedānta. But this incentive for work and accepting work or service to all created beings as a path to salvation is not just what Buddha stressed. It is based upon in one extreme on divinity of soul drawn from Advaita Vedānta and Śri Ramakrishna and on the other hand, on the aspiration after liberation based upon Buddhistic humanism. But it is a cult by itself. Karma itself is religion, for it is based upon illumination of soul and identity of all souls. It is worship of Brahman or one Soul or God. It is the current of thought in Vivekananda's philosophy. It is not enough to call him a practical Vedāntist.

Swamiji extended the concept of Karma-Yoga to include secular activities of man. According to him, all activities that help a man in manifesting his potential divinity are good and hence religious. Swamiji's definition of religion is broad enough in the sense that it includes all our activities if done in the right spirit - even those of a doctor, engineer, farmer, lawyer or businessmen. Referring to this approach of Swamiji Sister Nivedita in her Introduction to
the complete works of Swamiji says:

"..... No distinction henceforth between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid. This is the realisation which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of Karma, not as divorced from, but as expressing Jñāna and Bhakti. To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple."

Since Marxism offers the greatest challenge to all religion in general and Hinduism in particular, it is illuminating to compare Swamiji's idea of Karma as a means of manifesting the potential divinity of a man with Karl Marx's concept of labour as a means of self-fulfilment and as a means of economic sufficiency of the society which includes individual self. Labour is creative of self and society. It is generally held that the goal of life according to Marx is only economic prosperity - materialistic gain. The German-born U.S. Psychologist Erich Fromm has pointed out that the above interpretation about Marx is not a correct one. "The very

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idea of Marx", he points out, "is to liberate man from the pressure of economic needs so that he can be fully human". Labour according to Marx is a factor that mediates between man and nature and in so doing, both man and nature are being transformed. Human labour transforms the objective reality into human reality. In transforming the objective reality, namely, nature and society man modifies the conditions of his own existence and thereby himself. Labour is man's self-expression and by it he develops and becomes truly himself. Eric Fromm opines that Marx following Hegel has understood labour as the 'act of man's self-creation'.

The labourer fulfils himself through his labour which transforms both him and the world. Marx is of opinion that in a capitalistic society a worker cannot attain this lofty ideal of self-fulfilment because work remains external to the labourer without being an expression to his nature.

Consequently he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure time,

58 Erich Fromm: Marx's concept of Man, p. 5.
whereas at work he feels hopeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed, forced labour. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs.

As a result, according to Marx, work ceases to be an expression of the worker's nature. Rather than fulfilling himself in his labour, he denies himself and feels alienated from his environments - from the society of which he is or should be a part. It is this alienation that breeds frustration, tension, and social conflict. This concept of 'alienation' (originally propounded by Hegel) in an age of industrialisation is at the core of Marx's philosophical position. But the solution he proceeded to suggest for the problem of alienation has proved far from satisfactory.

Thus against the background of social unrest for which Marxism is the most appealing - yet still unsatisfactory - answer, we now glimpse the importance of Swamiji's concept of Karma. He re-interprets Karma as an expression of the highest jñāna and bhakti. Since every man is potentially divine, service of man is according to Swamiji, service of God in man. And by God Swamiji means the all-pervading Spirit that forms the substratum of all beings. Thus society as a whole forms also a part of the 'divine Continuum', and every socially useful work is connected with this Continuum. As long as a
man does socially useful work, he is expressing through himself the glory of the spiritual substratum of his being, and there is no alienation for him. It is while a man indulges in antisocial or destructive acts, that the divine Continuum in him becomes clouded and he gets alienated from that common background. So the real alienation for man is estrangement from his own higher self. No type of work imposed by industrialisation can cause alienation for man unless he first is alienated from his own Self. Alienation takes place only to the extent that work becomes an expression of the ego or lower self, and not when it becomes an expression of one's higher Self. The dream of a worker's paradise where every work will be a creative one, where everybody is paid according to his need, has never yet been realised either in the so-called Communist or Capitalist countries. Everywhere, workers have to put up with monotony, boredom, uncertainty and conflicts. This is the price man has to pay for his technological advancement. Until the whole social structure is overhauled and the 'millennium' is reached, what we can and must provide the worker with, is a philosophy of life, which sees meaning in all kinds of work, which seeks to transcend the limitations of work in its role as a means to higher fulfilment. Here the doctrine of the manifestation of the potential divinity of man - in the face of limitation,
boredom, and anguish - alone can provide a meaning to human activities, of all types whatsoever.

Spinning cotton, dressing vegetables, oiling machines, tightening nuts and bolts, teaching music - all may appear to be monotonous; but they cease to be so, and begin to acquire meaning, if we regard each act as a step towards God, if we regard it as an act of manifesting our potential divinity. Thus in bringing all of man's activities, sacred or secular, traditional or modern, within the sphere of Karma-Yoga, Swamiji prepared as it were the synthesis (between religion and materialism) to finally replace marxism as well as all other materialistic philosophies.

Life is made sacred and charming. It is an exciting experience. It is contrary view of life to one as expressed through Advaita Vedanta or even the one as professed through Buddhistic creed of Karma excepting that it is also a creed of Karma which leads to same destination as Jñāna or Bhakti. Creed of Karma is divine, yet it is a means of social welfare and human welfare. It is a spiritual activity as much as it is an activity for fulfilment of social and human needs. Even the need of Karma as preached in Buddhism is a stoical virtue. But in Vivekananda it is the aroma or spice of life. It is a divine act of sublimation and enrichment of soul. Again it is
not merely a social duty as in Marxian philosophy. It is ethical and moral and religious. It is worship of God in man.

Swamiji paints out that the problem of poverty in India is closely connected with caste. This will be evident from the fact that the poorer people in India belong mostly to the lower classes of society. Hence in India we are to uplift the masses which will virtually mean social uplift. In Vivekananda's words, "O India! ......... forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian and proudly proclaim, "I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother ......... Thou, too clad with but a round thy loins, proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice: The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, ....... Indian's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age....... say, brother: The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good". What India now needs is a new social philosophy, a new ethos of the people, where every man can find the dignity of the individual, equal opportunity for

59 Advapita Ashrama: Selections from Swami Vivekananda, 4th impression, p.534.
work, and for self-development. According to Swami Vivekananda the Vedantic doctrine of the potential divinity of man alone can provide this. We already have the right philosophy here; but it has never been properly applied to solve the social problems.

Swamiji thinks that total breakdown of caste system is neither desirable nor practicable. All the castes tried not only to fulfill their own allotted duties but also to maintain the ideal of organic unity. There lies the utility of caste system. But the situation gradually changed in course of time. With the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few belonging to the privileged classes, the lower classes became the subject of inhuman torture and humiliation. Swamiji was very much pained at the sight of inhuman torture and humiliation which has been brought by man on man. He questions, can a situation continue in which on the one hand you say that all persons are divine, Amritasya Putra, and on the other hand, you discriminate against people just because they happen to be born of a certain class, in a certain caste, in a certain community? If you say there is heredity then my answer is that heredity is the result of Karma and Karma of the sudra expels the heredity of the Brahmin. Let us all be Brahmins. That is the ideal. The present caste is without it. Why then does it exist? - By inertia. How to overcome the inertia? By the
mighty power of love. Almost all our religious movements from the time of Buddha downwards have been directed against caste and they were all successful more or less – and most successful was Buddha, for nobody in the history of the world loved better than he. Swamiji opines that the total breakdown of the caste system is not possible nor is it desirable. He thinks that the only element that is bad about caste is its simply the misuse of privilege. As he puts it –

"I must frankly tell you that I am neither a caste-breaker nor a mere social reformer............. Live in any caste you like, but there is no reason why you should hate another man or another caste. It is love and love alone that I preach, and I base my teaching on the great Vedantic truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the Soul of the Universe." 60

There is another reason why Swamiji did not try like several modern reformers to abolish the caste system. Such movement would result in the creation of another caste like Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj, the Lingayats of South India and the Sikhs of the Punjab. As a man of the future Swamiji with a prophetic insight visualised that any social reform of Hindu society as a whole has to be achieved within

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the framework of caste. In this respect Swamiji's contribution to the solution of caste problem is unique. He is firmly of opinion that the solution to the caste problem does not lay in levelling down but in levelling up. He tells us that -

Our solution of the caste question is not degrading those who are already high up ...... but it comes by every one of us fulfilling the dictates of our Vedāntic religion, by our attaining spirituality and by our becoming the ideal Brahmin. There is the law laid on each one of us, ......... that you must make progress without stopping, and that, from the highest man to the lowest Pariah, everyone in this country has to try and become the ideal Brahmin. This Vedāntic idea is applicable not only here but over the whole world,

By the term 'Brahmin' he means the ideal of a Brahmin. He is out to revive the ancient connotation of the term 'Brahmin' and make it the social ideal for all the Hindus. To quote Swamiji -

"Our ideal is the Brahmin of spiritual culture and renunciation. By the Brahmin ideal what do I mean? I mean the ideal Brahmin-ness in which worldliness is altogether absent and true wisdom is abundantly present. That is the ideal of the Hindu race"61

Swamiji thinks that all Hindus irrespective of caste can attain this ideal of Brahminhood by a study of Upanishads and leading a spiritual life. Fighting amongst themselves, would weaken the society. Instead they should try to attain the superior culture and spirituality represented by the Brahmin ideal. Hindus belonging to different strata of society must accept the Brahmin ideal for eliminating the differences between caste altogether. This is what Swamiji meant by the 'levelling-up' process.

The initiative for this process of levelling up, Swamiji thinks must come from the Brahmins whose very existence is possible because of other castes. Hence the Brahmins are morally bound to give the entire human society their contribution. In this connection we cannot but refer to Swamiji's cautions warning: -

To the Brahmins I appeal, that they must work hard to raise the Indian people by teaching them what they know, by giving out the culture that they have accumulated for centuries. It is clearly the duty of the Brahmins of India to remember what real Brahminhood is. As Manu says, "All these privileges and honours are given to the Brahmin, because with him is the treasury of virtue.......... So this accumulated culture of ages of which the Brahmin has been the trustee, he must
now give to the people at large, and it was because he did not give it to the people that the Mohammedan invasion was possible. It was because he did not open this treasury to the people from the beginning, that for a thousand years we have been trodden under the heels of everyone who chose to come to India."62.

At present though in free India much has been done for the improvement of the economic condition of the lower classes, very little has been done for raising the social status of the people and this can be achieved only through the acquisition of higher culture. This is what Swamiji wanted us to do long ago. Swamiji's message still remains to us as a guideline. His message is an ideal to us which if followed in practice will eradicate many problems with which we are involved in free India.

We have already pointed out that Swamiji's approach to caste problem is constructive rather than destructive. He admitted the usefulness of caste while demanding the abolition of its privileges. Here he has applied the doctrine of the potential divinity of man. To quote his words -

"Caste is good. That is the only natural way of solving life. Men must form themselves into groups, and you cannot

get rid of that. Wherever you go, there will be caste. But that does not mean that there should be these privileges. They should be knocked on the head. If you teach, Vedānta to the fisherman, he will say, 'I am as good a man as you; I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same God in me, as you have in you'. And that is what we want, no privilege for any one, equal chances for all, let every one be taught that the divine is within, and everyone will work out his own salvation". The days of exclusive privileges and exclusive claims are gone, gone for ever from the soil of India. So Swamiji is also like Marx against all privileges, against all inequality of status and social injustice.

Last but not the least Swamiji wants that in future caste would be based upon the temperament and behaviour of the individual. He thinks that each man can manifest the qualities of all the castes. He tells us that as there are Sattya, Rajas and Tamas - one or other of these Gunas more or less - in every man, so the qualities which make a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra are inherent in every man, more or less. But at times one or other of these qualities predominates in him in varying degrees and it is manifested accordingly.

Take a man in his different pursuits, for example: When he is

engaged in serving another for pay' he is in Shudrahood; when he is busy transacting some piece of business for profit, on his account, he is a Vaishya; When he fights to right wrongs, then the qualities of a Kshatriya come out in him; and when he meditates on God, or passes time in conversation about Him, then he is a Brahmin. Naturally it is quite possible for one to be changed from one caste into another. Otherwise, how did Vishvamitra become a Brahmin and Parashurama a Kshatriya?

What is most needed at present is that the upper caste people must realise that they have inherent in them, all the qualities traditionally ascribed to lower castes; and what distinguishes them from the latter is only their birth. This awareness would make the upper castes more sympathetic and considerate towards their less fortunate brethren. It would also enable them to adjust with the new kind of social stratification that is being formed now in the Hindu Society. In other words, castes should be replaced by classes.

Present campaign of intermarry for elimination of class distinction is politician process of oversimplifying a complex problem of making a classless society. It sabotages the entire moral structure of society, the spirit of humanity involved in social fabric. Seemingly it is equal status for all.
But the way it is done is a mechanical process. The men of different spiritual level of understanding are compelled by pressure of economic and social urgency, are made to marry in a different caste. There is no prompting of soul in this act of 'mechanical' social act; no 'life-force', in the language of Bernard Shove is working through this intermarry. Caste is broken but it does no more on creation of a 'class' as envisaged by Swamiji.

While Swamiji talked of creation of a new 'class' he did not use it in the Marxian sense of 'have: and have-nots', 'Capitalists and proletariat' 'Patricians and plebian'. He used in the special sense of creating a 'Brahmanical' class which means again not creating Brahmins based on birth or lineage, but the cult of Brahmanism - and the entire spiritual and ethical and moral connotation of the word. He wanted levelling up, and not levelling down. Entire social process adopted by the modern politicians is the process of level-down in the name of socialism, equal social opportunity for all. Swamiji's concept of socialism was based upon not material concept of it - though he cried for economical emancipation for all. He accused all the educated and moneyed men as traitors because they have deprived the poor of the benefit of their learning and economic comforts. In Swamiji's words, "So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance,
I hold every man a traitor who having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them!"65.

Yet he did not stop at that. Mere economic salvation and equality of status based upon equitable economic distribution will not do. It will be the reign of Sudra cult, the 'Tama Guna', which he abhates. He wants to establish or re-establish Satya-Guna, the reign of ancient culture and civilisation, the supremacy of the Spirit of God-head - based on the conviction that every creature is a God incarnate. 'So work for this God as manifested in created beings.' 'Renunciation or Service' for here is God, for here is heaven, for here is moksha or liberation. We

A new philosophical basis for India's National ideal:

The Republic of India has adopted the maxim 'truth alone triumphs' as its motto. But Swami Vivekananda opines that the national motto cannot be other than 'Renunciation and Service'. To quote his words -

The national ideals of India are Renunciation and Service. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.

Renunciation: The Bhagavad Gītā takes the word 'renunciation' in two senses. In the first sense it takes the word 'renunciation' in the sense of total giving up of all obligatory duties and works with desires; and in the second sense, it means the giving up of only the fruits of one's actions and not the actions themselves. The first method called Sannyāsa is the ideal for monks, and the second one called Tyāga is the ideal for householders. Though the terms 'Sannyāsa' and 'Tyāga' very from each other, there is a common factor to both which is nothing but detachment of the self or 'anasakti'.

Swamiji thinks that renunciation in the sense of total giving up of all obligatory duties and works with desires, is not possible for the majority of people. Buddha, Swamiji thinks, has committed a mistake in emphasizing total renunciation, in flooding the whole country with monks. Vedānta, according to him, opens up a number of paths for the attainment of liberation. Thus we find the word renunciation has been taken in the sense of 'detachment' by Swami Vivekananda.

Service - By service Swami Vivekananda means sacred and obligatory social act based on ontological fact. In its pure essence the soul of man is inseparably connected with God. In a higher sense every man is God Himself. Hence service in any form to a man is inevitably a service to God in that form.
Service thus becomes, not an obligation, but a privilege, not a duty, but a right: not a secular act, but a sacred religious act. Service with such attitude is true worship. In his words: -

"It is a privilege to serve mankind, for this is the worship of God. God is he, if all these human souls. He is the soul of man."66

Swamiji has made religion an important social factor by this doctrine of service. Social service and religious worship have become identical in his hands. He has given a new meaning, value and power to the scriptural passages like the following which had for centuries lost all their practical significance and social relevance. The passages run as follows:

Thou art the woman, the man, the boy
and the girl;
Thou art the old man
his staff;
Thou indeed hast assumed all these various forms"67.

For Vivekananda this was a matter of direct experience and not a mere philosophical doctrine. He visualised the

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67 Śāvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, IV, 3.
living God all around him. It is a great opportunity for all of us to serve God in and through man who is subjected to untold sufferings in this world of actual experience. It is because of the fact that Swamiji has realised the divinity of man in his heart of hearts that he prayed again and again —

"... May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sumtotal of all souls — and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship." "This realisation came to Swamiji through his Guru Sri Ramakrishna who prayed to Kali in identical voice and words —

Mother, I donot want mokṣa, let me live in the midst of your created beings and lift them up, try for their liberation.

This direct spiritual experience of the divinity of the human soul has made Swamiji proclaim that 'the national ideals of India are Renunciation and Service'.

Renunciation and Service are the best forms of the practical application
of Swamiji's doctrine of the potential divinity of man. Mahatma Gandhi was also inspired by Swamiji's idea of the divinity of man. Hence he called the so-called untouchables of India 'Harijans'.

But unfortunately, instead of the spirit of detachment and service, a refined kind of materialism in the form of clinging to sense enjoyments and love for leisure, lack of moral integrity and intellectual alertness has become widely prevalent among the educated classes of modern India. Painting out an accusing finger at this section of the people Swamiji said:

"So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them!"^69

To one of his disciples in America he wrote, "Do you mean to say that I am born to live and die one of those caste-ridden, superstitious, merciless, hypocritical, atheistic cowards, that we find only amongst the educated Hindus?"^70

At present people in India show indifference and apathy


^70 His Eastern and Western Disciples: The life of Swami Vivekananda, p.372.
towards others in the name of detachment. But this is a
wrong interpretation of the term 'detachment' which means detach­
ment from one's passions, and all forms of selfishness. With
a view to avoiding wrong interpretation of the term 'detach­
ment' he puts 'service' side by side with with renunciation.
Otherwise there is every possibility of practising the grossest
form of selfishness in the name of 'detachment'.

The spirit of detachment and service must be culti­
vated in India so that it can rise or attain the greatest in
any field. We have to awaken and cultivate in ourselves this
ancient spirit and infuse it in scientific research, in tech­
nology, in business, in teaching, in nursing, in village
improvement, in social uplift and in all walks of life. Without
a minimum of this spirit of selflessness and service, India
cannot rise or attain greatness in any field. Thus the spirit
of selfless service has been extended to sphere of human
activities.

It has been rightly observed, IN VIVEKANANDA THE PAST
AND FUTURE OF INDIA FUSED IN AN IDEAL WAY AND HE SHINES AS
THE SYMBOL OF INTEGRATED INDIA FOR CENTURIES TO COME. HE HAD
INTRODUCED HIMSELF TO ONE OF HIS COUNTRYMEN AS 'I AM CONDENSED
INDIA'.

!Go back to the Upaniṣads!' Vivekananda commanded his
countrymen. We take the liberty of restating that command here: 'Go back to Vivekananda! He is a great mine of strength! In that return lies the restoration of individual and national health, vigour, stability, integrity and prosperity.

We may here refer to a few illuminating passages of Swami Vivekananda which would go to show the deep admiration he had for India and also the ideal he suggested for her future guidance which would lead her to occupy the supreme or foremost place in the world in which we live, more and have our being. The passages run as follows:

"If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed Punya Bhumi (holy land), to be the land to which all souls on this earth must come to account for Karma, the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and of spirituality, - it is India. This is the motherland of philosophy, of spirituality, and of ethics, of sweetness, gentleness, and love. These still exist, and my experience of the world leads me to stand on firm ground, and make the bold statement, that India is still the first and foremost of all the nations of the world in these respects....
The debt which the world owes to our Motherland is immense."

If I ask myself what has been the cause of India's greatness, I answer, because we have never conquered. That is our glory. Amongst all races of the world, from the earliest time in history, India has been called the land of wisdom. For ages India itself has never gone to conquer other nations. Wisdom and philosophy donot want to be carried on floods of blood. Wisdom and philosophy donot march upon bleeding human bodies, donot march with violence but come on the wings of peace and love, and that has always been so.

"India will be raised, not with the power of the flesh, but with the power of the spirit; not with the flag of destruction, but with the flag of peace and love. One vision I see clear as light before me that the ancient Mother has awakened once more sitting on Her throne - rejuvenated, more glorious than ever. Proclaim Her to all the world with the voice of peace and benediction."

"O India! forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Then brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, every Indian is my brother. Thou, too, clad with but a rag round thy loins, proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice: The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life. India's
society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age'. Say brother: "The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good". Is it mere patriotism or nationalism? No it is sublimation of all the highest virtues of man and life, religion, philosophy and Godhead.

In Swami Vivekananda's writings and discourses we find that the essence of a living eternal India has found expression. Realising this fact, Rabindranath Tagore said, "If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative". Prof. K.K. Mukherjee observes, "Vivekananda embodied in himself manifold aspects of Indian life, culture and tradition. He was not merely a preacher who interpreted Eastern religion and spiritualism to the West but was at the same time a great social reformer, an eminent philosopher-educator, and above all, a world-renowned prophet of humanitarianism. There is no sphere of India's social and cultural life which Vivekananda did not set his hands upon, in one way or other, and sought to bring about reforms in that area". But Vivekananda is not merely a reformer. To characterise him as a reformer is to belittle him.

72 Prof. K.K. Mukherjee: Great Educators, p. 212
He was out to rouse the eternal spirit of mankind in every sphere of life. That is why, Vivekananda is considered to be a man who lived in the past, lives in the present and will continue to live in the future and mould the destiny of human beings in whom there remains the potential divinity.

Swamiji's three prophesies on India, Russia and China and the World proletariat have come true. After his return from the West, he appealed to the people of India to forget all other gods and goddesses and to worship the only living goddess, their Motherland, for the following fifty years in order to bring about her liberation. Swamiji's prophecy has come true. India attained independence just after a period of fifty years as mentioned by him.

In 1896 Swamiji has made a prophecy about Russia and China which also has materialised in practice. In 1896, Swamiji said to Sister Christine (Miss Greenstidel) one of his disciples that the next upheaval to usher in a new era would come from Russia and China. Russian Revolution took place in 1817 and China became Communist in 1949.

The third prophecy about the international proletariat is epoch-making. Partaining to it here are the important declaration of Swamiji*: Last will come the labourer's (Sudra) rule. Its advantages will be the distribution of physical comforts.
The Socialism or some form of rule of people, call it what you will, is coming on the boards. The people will certainly want the satisfaction of their material needs, less work, oppression, no war, more food. We are in the middle of this social change. Socialism of different nomenclatures are clamouring for acceptance in the political and economic infrastructure of our society. But India has lost the ancient spirit of her culture and civilisation which Swamiji so eloquently declared to the whole world for the survival of humanity from total spiritual destruction. In Swamiji's words - Resurrect the ancient Spirit and culture of India to save the world.

Future world shall require the genius and spirit of Swamiji to survive itself from the evils of unadulterated use of Marxism. Already rot has started and made severe dents into the Marxian materialism or the materialism as practised by the Western World. Vivekananda is at once a challenge and a warning to the entire world - which includes India as well.

So Swamiji is the beacon light of the world in this darkest day of materialistic civilisation. Here is the future man whom the world must take as its guide in order that it does not get bogged down in general catastrophe. For, "We donot live the past dawn but noon of future", as so magnificently expressed by Sri Aurobindo - another savant of India.
All in All, Swami Vivekananda offered to the world Advaita Vedānta as re-oriented and projected by him to the world as a moral and spiritual basis of humanity, so that man can look upon the world with a new vision, the vision of divinity in man and in himself, the vision of identity of man with the eternal Soul or Brahman. This philosophical outlook will help mankind to eschew violence, and have love and devotion for the entire humanity, look at man's foibles and failings as his own and acknowledge them and remove them with personal feeling.

Here is a man who has embraced everything, rejects nothing, except falsehood, hypocrisy, tyranny, exploitation and opportunism.

Everything is positive and creative in him. Life is an evergrowing and developing principle. It is dynamic, and versatile. It is deep, many-headed and variegated. It has many splendid beauty. It is full of fragrance and has dimensions. It has sweetness, light, grace and aroma.

This vision of man is only possible for a man who has been inspired and illuminated by the spirit of Advaita Vedānta which is the ancient heritage of India from hoary past. Only while the people all over the world will be imbued with this spirit of Vadānta that they would be able to resolve all their problems - political, economic, social. So long.
as they will be isolated from each other by barriers of geographical boundary, religion, caste, creed or complexion, they would be treading on the arid land of rivalry, jealousy, anger, and frustration. Bickerings, feud, warfare and destruction will be inevitable offshoots of life. Only the spirit of Advaita Vedanta can diffuse all these and can create a world where the omniscient, omnipotent, ubiquitous spirit of Godhead shall prevail.

The peace and tranquillity is conditioned by the equilibrium of all divergent pulls of man’s life. This equilibrium is achievable only through the spiritualism of Advaita Vedanta.

Swamiji revived that old spirit, recast and remodeled it, to make it relevant to the modern world - full of complexities and contradictions. This frenzied world can be placed on bed-rock of stability and security through the perennial spirit of Advaita Vedanta.

Vivekananda is the greatest exponent of that spirit. He is the great personality who could turn back the eyes of the world from its oblong gaze. He is the man who gave new vision to the eyes of humanity, got dim, and lost in darkness of selfishness, love of dominance and power, vain boasting and idiology.

Vivekananda is not merely a theoretician, but a man
of practical wisdom. He has insight and far-sight. He is the beacon light of the world, lost in the midst of encircling gloom.

His is an eternal personality which had its beginning and source rooted in the ancient philosophy of Advaita Vedānta, which sustained itself through the long history of humanity which projects and focusses itself to the dim distance of future where human vision cannot reach.

He is the epitome of India's culture, civilisation and will remain the epitome of perfect humanity, where spirituality, humanity, Ānā, Karma and Bhakti - all found a perfect image and eternal glory.
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