CHAPTER XI

Vivekananda - the Eternal Spirit of Mankind

Swami Vivekananda can be looked upon as a great organis­er or a great orator, as one whose heart bled for the poor in this country and abroad or as one who successfully carried the message of Vedānta to foreign lands; he can also be looked upon as an intellectual giant who built a bridge between the East and the West, as also between reason and faith. But behind all these there was that fundamental basic inspiration, his spiritual realisation. Swamiji is the embodiment of the basic spiritual aspiration of mankind.

Swami Vivekananda derived all the inspiration for his work from that touch with the spiritual depth of his own being. It is this aspect of his personality that gives nourishment to all that he said and all that he did.

"If Swami Vivekananda exerted so much influence on the contemporary world and continues to exert that influence in ever increasing measure in the East and the West, it is..."
because he realised the eternal truth in his own being, and sought inspiration from that in his work to compose the distractions of our age. The edifice of his character was built on the rock foundation of spirituality which found expression in a vigorous personality of scientillating intellect and measureless heart. "He has realised the eternal truths in him and handed down to the people all over the world, as the only source of solace and resolution of worldly worries and problems.

Though Swami Vivekananda was a many-sided personality and can appear to us in various hues, but his greatness had something eternal about it unlike the passing greatness familiar in the world of achievements. The flow of time affects such greatness in a strange way; it augments it instead of diminishing and destroying it. Rooted in the Atman and drawing nourishment therefore, the personality and work of such men and women carry something compelled in it and possess an enduring character.

"It is significant that though he had dived deep into the ocean of spiritual realisation, he did not give the same message, or rather the message in the same form, to India.

as he gave to the West. He varied his message to suit the needs of the people; but all these variations were expressions of one central theme - spirituality”.

The people of West who were groping in the darkness of materialism and Industrial civilisation and gasping for the breath of spiritual respite, serenity and tranquillity of soul, were once more made aware of the spiritual existence of mankind, and were urged upon to look upon the entire humanity as one, shore of all physical differences, and also to curb their material aspiration to allow the breath of heaven to enter into their souls. The Eastern people, to the Indians, he while reminding them in the same breath of their spiritual birth and inheritance, called upon to accept reality of material needs to stir up to solve the material problems with the application of science and technology, but never to barter away their souls for material aggrandisement. So the West is a challenge and a warning to the East. Thus Swamiji blended the double aspirations of mankind in a harmonious integral whole. He stands astride both the worlds - the world of spirituality and the world of material reality - one not pitted against the other in a bitter rivalry or fight but one peacefully finding its place by the side of another.

In this prospect of a new world spiritualism will be living side by side with material fulfilment. One shall complement the other. In this concept he sowed the seed of neo-social revolution and envisaged the future glory and triumph of mankind. Communist society envisaged merely one aspect of mankind. Swamiji has a fuller view of life, the vision of a society of fulfilment and glory in all aspects. It is everlasting yet not stagnant. It is dynamic, it has depth and dimension. This comprises the sumtotal of human knowledge.

Also Vivekananda built up a bridge between the East and West against the backdrop of Advaita Vedānta and Humanism of Buddha.

In Swamiji's words, "India's contribution to the sumtotal of human knowledge has been spirituality, philosophy. There she contributed even long before the rising of the Persian Empire; the second time was during the Persian Empire; for the third time during the ascendency of the Greeks; and now for the fourth time during the ascendency of the English, she is going to fulfil the same destiny once more".³

Mentioning this unique feature of India's impact on the rest of the world Swami Vivekananda says that the debt which the world owes to our motherland is immense. Civilisations have arisen in other parts of the world. In ancient

³ Swami Vivekananda : Lectures from Colombo to Almora, p.72 (Nineth Edition)
and modern times, wonderful and modern ideas have been carried forward from one race to another. ......... but mark you, my friends, it has been always with the blast of war trumpets and with the march of embattledcohorts. Each idea has to be soaked in a deluge of blood. Each word of power had to be followed by the groans of millions, by the wails of orphans, by the tears of widows. This in the main, other nations, have taught, but India for thousands of years peacefully existed. Here activity prevailed when even Greece did not exist ...... ......... Even earlier, when history has no record, and tradition dares not peer into the gloom of that intense past, even from then until now, ideas after ideas have marched out from her but every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it and peace before it. We, of all nations of the world, have never been a conquering race, and that blessing is on our head, and therefore we live .................

Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was and, mark my words, it never will be. But there has been the other mission given to us, which is to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate as it were into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race and that concentrated energy is to pour faith in a deluge on the world whenever circumstances are propitious. Let the Persian or the Greek, the Roman, the Arab, or the Englishman march his
battalions, conquer the world, and link the different nations together, and the philosophy of spirituality of India is ever ready to flow along the new-made channels into views of the nations of the world. The Hindus calm brain must pour out its own quota to give to the sumtotal of human progress. India's gift to the world is the light spiritual.

Referring to this influence on the modern age, Swami Vivekananda goes on to say, "Those who keep their eyes open, those who understand the workings in the minds of different nations of the West, those who are thinkers and study the different nations, will find the immense change that has been produced in the tone, the procedure, in the methods and in the literature of the world by this slow, never-ceasing permeation of Indian thought. But there is another peculiarity as I have already hinted to you. We never preached our thoughts with fire and sword. If there is one word in the English language to represent the gift of India to the world, if there is one word in the English language to express the effect which the literature of India produces upon mankind, it is this one word, 'facination' ............... Slow and silent as the gentle dew that falls in the morning, unseen and unheard, yet producing a most tremendous result, has been the work of this calm, patient, all suffering, spiritual race.
upon the world of thought"\textsuperscript{4}.

He emphatically declares, "Up, India, and conquer the world with your spirituality!" \textsuperscript{5}

He goes on to say, that spirituality is the core of every religion. The more spiritual a man, the more universal he is. Modern man stood in urgent need of this education from religion, by which men will learn to make their love of God flow into the love and service of all men.

This concept of Godhead in man is the unique contribution of Ved\text{"a}nta as exposited and propounded by Sri Ramkr\text{"i}"\text{\hspace{-1em}hna-Vivekananda. Christianity tells of brotherhood of mankind in relation to God the father. But Advaita Ved\text{"a}nta identifies mankind with God. - a thought not based upon ratiocination or reason simply, it is profound realisation of Swamiji through the spiritual enlightenment of Sri Ramkrishna. There is no other religion in the world which can even touch the fringe of this profound concept and there can hardly be any further extension of this concept. It is unique, co-extensive with created world and perennial in its influence.}"

\textsuperscript{4} Lectures from Colombo to Almora, p.8 (Nineth Impression)
Achileon of metaphysics and logic to the level of the experience of common humanity - the ideal and idealism have been made real and practical. It is woven into the warp and woof of an Ideal Society. It is not merely a process and path to 'Heaven', as professed by Christ. It is heaven itself. It is liberation.

In Sri Ramakrishna's words, Swami Vivekanda is 'Shiva' born 'to bring spiritual consciousness to people, and to remove the miseries of the world'.

The question remains to be answered, what do we mean by spirituality then? In reply we quote a few illuminating passages from Swami Vivekananda which will reveal the exact nature of spirituality.

"This intense longing - becoming mad after realising God or getting the knowledge of the Self is real spirituality"  

"Let us put forth all our energies to acquire that which never fails - our spiritual perfection"  

"It is better to die seeking a God than as a dog seeking only carrion".

But Vivekananda is not satisfied with above contentions. He had direct realisation of God in his heart of hearts by the grace of his Guru Sri Ramakrishna, the Divine Personality. So he goes on to say -

"If there is a God we must see Him, if there is a Soul we must perceive it; otherwise it is better not to believe. It is better to be an outspoken atheist than a hypocrite."

Again Swamiji said:

"If there is one universal truth in all religions, I place it here - in realising God. Ideals and methods may differ but that is the central point. There may be a thousand different radii, but they all converge to the one centre and that is the realisation of God; something behind this world of sense; this world of eternal eating and drinking and talking nonsense, this world of false shadows and selfishness. There is that beyond all books, beyond all creeds, beyond the vanities of this world, and it is the realisation of God within himself. A man may believe in all the churches in the world, he may carry in his head all the sacred books ever written, he may baptise himself in all the rivers of the earth, still if he has no perception of God, I would class him with 

the rankest atheist. A degeneration from this ideal will generate all kinds of problems. The eternal spirit of India is expressed through the voice of Swami Vivekananda who like Sri Ramakrishna is also a man of realisation. He is not only a preacher-monk - an ambassador of cultural and religious heritage, of India but also an eternal source of spiritual inspiration for all mankind of all ages and climes. He emphatically declared before the world that the solution of all problems, national and international lies in the awakening of each soul to realise the divinity within him. The innate divinity of man was the constant theme of all his teaching. He wanted to tune all aspects of our life to this ultimate spiritual goal. To quote his words, "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest 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."


Here is a revolutionary process and a creed in the field of religion as much as it is in the realm of social reformation. It serves as the basis of all social reconstruction. Only then human society nationally as well as internationally shall find its desired goal of peace, progress and fulfilment, free from narrowness, superstition, rivalry, bickering and jealousy. Thus he also pioneered the way to social reconstruction where all shall find their legitimate places with dignity, justice and in peaceful co-existence, sharing the full benefit of progress and prosperity.

Humanity through its long history is striving after such a harmonious life - while there are earth's and earthly problems there is also the other and bigger and more insistent problem of life beyond, - the question of salvation, or final union with God in Heaven. All this ticklish and baffling questions have been once for all tracked and resolved by Swamiji's wisdom gathered by his traversing through the realm of Advaita Vedânta and Buddhistic humanism and humanitarianism and to crown all through his personal realisation of God with a spiritual touch point his Guru Sri Ramakrishna.

The essence of religion is to deliver us from bondage and suffering. What constitutes our bondage? It is the sense of "I" and "mine", in other words, selfishness. Selfishness
is bondage, unselfishness or love is freedom. All the four Yogas are paths to attain freedom or God-realisation. In each the spiritual content is the same, the destruction of "I" or "mine", or "selfishness".

Swamiji's message of finding God in all created beings, his identification of self with God and all human beings is an extension of the above concept; 'Love thyself to find a thyself' - is key to salvation. To make oneself free from the shackles of 'self-consciousness' or 'egotism' - is the beginning and end of all knowledge. It is the doorway to salvation.

That is the only hope for the world. If we fall short of living up to the great Advaitic truth as Swamiji taught it - the truth that all human beings the world over are one, that all are manifestations of the same Divinity - we will not be able to solve the problems of the present age. (U.N.O. is a superficial and petty attempt to realise that high ideals of oneness of humanity.) On what else if not a sense of the divine unity of all mankind can one base the selfless understanding, love and help that is imperative today everywhere? Nor is love by itself enough. Strength is also necessary. One can stand on the shore and love a drowning man with all one's heart; one can weep buckets of selfless tears for him, but
if one cannot swim, the man will drown just the same. We must have the strength, the ability, the self-confidence and fearlessness that arise from faith in our own divinity if we are to face and master the obstructive forces of the world. And master them we must if we are to help ourselves, and serve others. As long as man thinks he is small - a finite, unlaerable creature - he will be either a coward or a bully; when he knows he is in reality the vast indestructible Spirit, than there is no love he cannot give and no obstacle he cannot conquer. About eighty years ago Swamiji taught these simple but profound truths in the West.

Love, strength and courage are necessary. May we add, urge for action, will to act, will to sacrifice are equally necessary? Swamiji preached that too. Work and sacrifice are the two corner stones of his message. But this incentive for action and sacrifice is just not the incentive of a politician or a worldliman or a businessman. It issues out of the sense of one Divinity in all. It is this oneness of spirit that motivates a Vedantist. To use a different imagery, it is the sensitivity of one organic being. A touch at any limb creates vibration through the entire organism.

Also, doing good to others is a fact of doing good to one's own soul and spirit. This unification of Spirit and
sensitivity is only possible for a being who has been lifted to this supra-conscious stage - purged of all pettiness, selfishness attaining the stature of full realisation of Brahman in himself - purna Brahma. Swamiji attained this stage. So whatever he said it came out of the depth of his realisation. Impact on other souls were irresistible.

Welcoming this spirit of expansion of modern India of which he himself was the spearhead, Swamiji said, "The first manifest effect of life is expansion. You must expand if you want to live. The moment you have ceased to expand, death is upon you, danger is ahead. I went to America and Europe, to which you so kindly allude; I had to, because that is the first sign of revival of national life, expansion. This reviving national life, expanding inside, threw me off, and thousands will be thrown off in that way. Mark my words, it has got to come if this nation lives at all. This question therefore, is the greatest of the signs of the revival of national life and through this expansion our quota of offering to the general mass of human knowledge, our contribution to the general upheaval of the world, is going out to the external world."

12 Lectures from Colombo to Almora, p.181 (Nineth impression)
We must bear in mind that India's expansion is philosophical and spiritual and not political and military.

For, how can Swamiji think of any other expansion? The long cultural and religious history of India has been the history of this message of spirituality — right from the Vedas through Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta down to Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. It took the air. It went on reverberating in the sky, air and ocean. It surmounted mountains and filled the sky in many lands and many chimes though the progress has been halted for the time being in China, S.E. Asia, America, it is still gathering momentum creating newer ripples and waves in the air embracing the entire world, embracing every spirit in far off lands.

Cautious warning has been given by Swami Vivekananda to his countrymen before his final departure from this world in the following words — India is immortal if she persists in her search for God, but if she gives it up and takes to politics and social conflicts, she will die. How prophetic the words were! The more and more Indians are getting involved in petty politics, social controversy, the more and more they are getting spiritually bogged.

To the Hindu, says Swamiji, 'Man is not travelling from error to truth, but climbing up from truth to truth, from
truth that is lower to truth that is higher. This and the teaching of mukti - the doctrine that "Man is to become Divine by realising the Divine", that religion is perfected in us only when it has led us to. "Him who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world, that One who is the only soul, of which all souls are but delusive manifestations" - may be taken as the two great outstanding truths which, authenticated by the longest and most complex experience in human history, India proclaimed through him to the modern world of the West."13

Swami Vivekananda preached the divinity of man and as a corollary of this truth he insisted on service or better still, worship of the God in man. It is evident that Swamiji owed this concept from the life and teaching of his Guru Sri Ramakrishna. Let us go back to Sri Ramakrishna with a view to understanding how Swamiji was indebted to Ramakrishna in the above respect.

Addressing a group of devotees on December 27, 1884, Sri Ramakrishna said, "If God can be worshipped in the image, why should He not be in man? It is but He who is departing in human form". Very often disciples heard him saying, "Holy men serve all beings knowing that God resides in all". This

is a realised truth to Sri Ramakrishna. This had an immediate and electrifying effect on Swami Vivekananda.

Innumerable number of quotations may be cited from Veda and Upaniṣads in support of this contention.

The Rg Veda says, "Purusa evedam sarvam yad bhutam yac ca bhavyam" - "All that there is or will be, is but the Supreme Being". The Svetasvatara Upaniṣad says "Thou art woman, thou art man; that art a young boy and again a young girl; thou art the old man tottering along with a stick; Thou taketh birth and assumeth all the forms." We find that the Upaniṣadic idea of the same Spirit pervading the whole universe took concrete shape in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. His self-identity did not remain confined to the human world; it spread to mute Nature as well. One day at Cossipore he saw from his sick-bed somebody walking on the lawn and at once asked his attendant to stop that indiscreet joy-walker, for he fell as though the man was treading on his very chest. That was not the reaction of some wealthy man embittered by the trampling of a well-trimmed lawn, but the agony of a saint who visualised God in everything and lived in Him.

Swamiji took his stand on the non-dualistic Vedānta philosophy of Śaṅkara, though at times he explained it in his

14 Svetasvatara Upanisad, IV, 3.
own way in accordance with the light he received from the life and teaching of Sri Ramakrishna. But the question arises, How can such a world-denying philosophy, that is Advaita Vedānta supply the motive power of service of humanity? Swamiji observed that the philosophy of Saṅkara has been interpreted so long negatively, as a result of which the world was taken to be an illusion and renunciation of it and particularly of all activities was considered to be the surest way to liberation. But Saṅkara is not a man who renounced all activities. His (Saṅkara's) life is a violent protest against such conception about Saṅkara. We may here quote with profit the following passages of Swami Gambhirananda in support of the above contention -

"If any one has any doubt as to that, one should only look at his (Saṅkara's) life; for his philosophy must not be detached from his deeds. He was a man of the highest nondualistic realisation, and yet he moved throughout the length and breadth of India establishing monasteries and temples, starting orders of monks for preserving the Vedas and the eternal religion, reforming Hinduism, and demolishing degrading ideas and pseudo-metaphysics. He was thus a man of action for the good of others. He was a devotee as well composing beautiful hymns and songs in praise of various deities. All this did not prove any denial of the world in any crass sense.
What Śaṅkara implied was that duality does not exist in the highest state of nirvikalpaka saṃādhi, but in that state all talk, all discussion stops. On the relative plane alone can one have dualistic conceptions. On this lower plane again we can have intellectual cogitation about duality and non-duality. But such disputation must not masquerade as realised truth. The highest realisation may negate the phenomenal relative world. But so long as we are actually on the relative plane, the world has its own right to exist. As Sri Ramakrishna put it, "So long as the "I" exists, the world exists, and God also exists". One can draw a parallel from the life of a scientist who reduces the world to mere atoms in his laboratory but at home deals with food, furniture and friends just like any other men. We are not concerned here with a philosophical justification of such behaviour; it is enough for us to note that it is a fact of life both for the man of realisation and the ordinary man. Any denial is self-deception.15

This is the crux of the whole concept of life. It is and is not. Men in their mundane level of existence have to experience and deal with visible and objective facts of life. They eat, drink and be merry. They suffer, shed tears, be, and die. These are visible facts of life. Men who

15 Swami Gambhirananda: India's contribution to World Thought and Culture, pp. 688-89.
have normally no super-mundane experience, cannot deny, ignore or laugh out these facts of common experience. A suffering man, a man of privation shall find no palliatives from metaphysical interpretation of life. Both Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda stressed this point - 'a hungry man can have no religion'. If men are God in many shapes they have also to suffer and die. They will therefore require the healing touch of other men.

This act of service to men is not mere humane, it is divine and religious. The consciousness of divinity in men is emanated and derived from Advaita Vedanta, from the supremest realisation of truths - the truth that lie deep in the universe, which is Soul. While 'soul' is the prima Causa or first cause and also the ultimate truths, the visible world or the phenomenal world has also a relative truth. Swamiji was reinforced into this consciousness by the divine touch of his Guru Sri Ramakrishna. He also felt the truth of it from the humanism of Buddha.

Swamiji wanted a combination of head and heart and for that purpose he brought together Śaṅkara's intellect and Buddha's heart so as not to leave philosophy detached from life. We donot thereby mean that Śaṅkara had no heart. What we mean by it is that Śaṅkara could not deny the claims of
the heart in his practical life, though he would not recognise them in his philosophical theory. A deeper reflection will reveal the fact that Śaṅkara did not possess the great universal heart which Buddha had. This will be evident when we make a comparative study of the life of Buddha and Śaṅkara in respect of their dealings with human beings in general. To quote Swami Vivekananda, "Śaṅkara with his great intellect, I an afraid, had not as great a heart. Rāmānuja's heart was greater. He felt for the down-trodden, he sympathised with them ........... You may mark one characteristic since the time of Rāmānuja - the opening of the door of spirituality to everyone. That has been the watchword of all prophets succeeding Rāmānuja". From a study of the life of Śaṅkara we come to know that Śaṅkara refused entry of a man into the temple simply because he is a sudra by birth but Buddha brushed aside all distinctions between man and man and like Sri Ramakrishna he had the feeling of oneness not only with all human beings but also with all sentient creatures. That is why he wanted to offer his life even for the sake of a lamb. To quote Swamiji, "He was the only man who was ever ready to give up his life for animals to stop a sacrifice. He once said to a King, 'If the sacrifice of a lamb helps you to go to heaven, sacrificing a man will help you better; so sacrifice

Hence we have every reason to conclude that though Śaṅkara is an advocate of the doctrine of Advaita Vedānta, he could not consistently carry the doctrine of Advaita Vedānta in his practical life. When we talk of Śaṅkara's intellect, we do not thereby mean that Buddha had no intellect. This would be evident from the fact that though Buddha wanted to avoid all metaphysical discussion and knowledge, in spite of his all-absorbing interest in the practical problem of life—the problem how to end misery, the metaphysical discussions automatically cropped up from his ethical teachings. What we mean by it is that Buddha did not entertain metaphysical discussion with a view to justifying his ethical teaching. Moreover, the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara has absorbed all the essential elements of Buddha's thought. So we are not unjustified in concluding that though Buddha possessed great universal heart, his ethical teaching because of his evading metaphysical speculation lacked the grip over men. In other words, if Buddha's teachings are to be provided with a metaphysical support, we have to search for it in Śaṅkara's Advaita. So Swamiji has accepted Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara as the basis with a view to building up the edifice of his philosophy of Neo-Vedānta. In this respect Swamiji may be called the greatest of all Western and Eastern philosophers including Buddha and Buddha.

Śāṅkara - the two architects of thought and culture of ancient India. Swamiji was convinced that India had all the best ideas in her possession but these ideas have to be put into practice. Prior to Buddha, Swamiji observed, we found lack of feeling in the matter of service. In Buddha he found a heart as wide as the ocean. In Śāṅkarachārya he saw tremendous intellectual power throwing the scorching light of reason upon everything. That is why, he considered Sankara's exapansion of Vedānta scientific. In Ramakrishna Swami Vivekananda saw the highest expression of Divinity on the human plane, a combination of the intellect of Śāṅkara and the heart of Buddha. Vivekananda is part and parcel of Sri Ramakrishna. So what he visualised in Sri Ramakrishna's life and teaching, he expressed them in his philosophy of Neo-Vedanta which though a combination of intellect of Sankara and heart of Buddha assumes a new statute and dimension in the hand of Swamiji. It is not mere Sankara that is speaking through him in a new voice, it is not Buddha that has found a new outlet and mouthpiece in Swamiji, it is not even amalgamation of Śāṅkara and Buddha. It is beyond and above these. If traces of Śāṅkara can be marked in Swamiji that Śāṅkara is transformed, transmuted and magnified and made more refulgent and glorious by Swamiji's genius and spiritual vision and realisation. That is not to say that Śāṅkara was not himself 'Śāṅkara, that is, 'Shiva', as he was held by enlightened. But there was the historical
necessity of another 'Shiva', so to speak, in the person of Swami Vivekananda who reinterpreted, added and remoulded the philosophy of life, in the light of Advaita Vedānta revealing newer aspects of it coalescing collaborating and straightening all apparent contradictions, anomalies, resolving an hiatus in the thought-pattern by varying traces, thereby a new perspective of life and the philosophy has been brought to view. For this monumental mission, Buddhism played a vital role, acting as an antithesis to Advaita Vedānta.

Lord Buddha equally stirred Vivekananda to the depth of his heart. Buddha's universal love and spirit of sacrifice and service undoubtedly created tremendous impact on him. Vivekananda's heart was inundated by the deluge of emotion. He gave immense flood of thought for Swamiji. Buddha's Karma Vada as the path for liberation of soul is supremely a positive approach to life; though the motive force of that Karma Vada is the desire for salvation, it has its root in the oceanful expanse of his humane heart and compassion. Theory apart, he was urged on to serve and sacrifice because it was inherent in him. Fulfilment of Buddha on Swamiji was equally insistent and weighty. Swamiji thus stands astride both the worlds of Śaṅkara and Buddha. Both of these peaks in the Himalayan range of Indian philosophy was evenly poised and balanced and made
into a new image in Swamiji. Swamiji hallowed by his inner light and reason, stands like great Apollo bestriding both the worlds of Śaṅkara and Buddha. The halo round the heads of this Apollo of Indian philosophic thought is sunlike in its brilliance, dazzling yet life-giving, scorching evils, prejudices and permersion, preserving all that is vital, holy and sustaining for mankind.

Like the Sun-God Apollo he dispelled ignorance and ushered in the dawn of new knowledge. Like him again he is the eternal spirit of revolt against poverty, injustice, and oppression, against superstition, against all crippling thoughts. Here is God's plenty. He stands for growth, development and expansion. He again typifies the craving of thirsting humanity for God. For that he merges himself with the seething millions of humanity to lift up their souls and direct their minds to the Eternal Spirit, in quest of salvation through service to humanity with complete self-dedication and devotion. This is true worship. This is genuine religion.

Thus religion is purged of all ritualism and hide-bound scriptural injunction, and brought to the reach of common man.

Swamiji stood for integration of personality. He did not believe that certain persons are exclusively fit for one
or other of the four modes of spiritual endeavour – namely, jñāna, bhakti, yoga and karma. A man of ordinary walks of life reasons, loves, thinks and acts. Swamiji opines that there is no reason to think that spiritual man will be devoid of qualities which ordinary man possesses. He stood for Karma-yoga which alone produces an integrated personality. In the worship of others as worship of God we find a combination of all the four moods. In other words, all the four paths of spiritual progress gets combined in Swamiji’s idea of service as worship. Thus it is evident that his path of liberation through service is not the same as popular idea of performance of one’s duty without motive or selfless work or Niskama-Karma. In the latter case it is held one has to perform one’s duty and then offer the result to God. But Swamiji opines that one has always to think of God – in the beginning, middle and end and there cannot be any question of offering the result, for the result is God’s from the very beginning. Besides the fields of application in Swamiji’s opinion should not be confined to mere scriptural or personal duties alone, but also social and other duties as that one’s heart reason prompts one to undertake. Besides the essential point in spiritual life is self-dedication along with expansion of the idea of identity with all or eradication of the same ego. And no path is more efficacious for this than service.
Man is God. So service to man is worship of God. For as Sri Ramakrishna said, 'If one can worship God in an idol, why not in man? Man is a living God so to say God, not in abstraction but in flesh and blood - moving, feeling and acting. Thus philosophy is not mere abstraction in the hands of Swamiji - it is practical religion. Hence Swamiji is a Vedāntist who made Advaita Vedanta practical, a way to life, a way to find God, a way to find salvation.

Swamiji talked of renunciation and service together. Explaining Swamiji's Ideal of Renunciation and Service, Swami Sambuddhananda has rightly said that Service is the medium in and through which renunciation manifests itself. In fact, renunciation is the soul and service its body. None can realise what renunciation is until and unless it finds its expression in and through selfless service. Service without renunciation is lifeless and renunciation without service is meaningless. Renunciation without service is a soul without a body and service without renunciation is a body without a soul. Service without renunciation, therefore is no service at all but dis-service. Service and renunciation are in reality one and the same. Service is not an act of charity; it is in reality an act of love, pure and selfless, done in disregard of consequences. Selfless, workers always know how to a really
ideal service, as distinguished from an ideally real, is to be conducted in a spirit of disinterested love for a worthy recipient of the same.

The ideal of Renunciation and Service found its highest expression in Swami Vivekananda, who appeared in fulfilment of the demand of the age after a long interval. It is not only in full consonance with all that has been preached by the prophets, Saints and Seers of the ancient ages but also marks a new era in the history of India.

We must admit that this spirit of Renunciation and Service is co-eval with Indian life and culture — prior to even Buddha. The new breath that has been blown over this high spirit is that it has been intertwined with the community and social life of the people and afforded a trellis to support it. What was confined to individual has been made universal in application. It is not just a preaching from the top of the Mount Sinai. It is personal participation and involvement with people — himself leading the grand procession on vanguard of active workers and missionaries to this noble supremest activities in this part of life. What is more, he preached that true act of religion, true path of salvation lay through this humanitarian mission. For here is God, here is heaven, here is salvation.
In sounds akin to Buddhistic creed, but with some difference. While Buddha talked of extinction of rebirth, because birth is so very full of misery, diseases and distress, Swamiji made a holy picture of life itself. Life is a ceremonial so to say, — full of attraction, glamour, excitement. To participate in this gorgeous feast of life is in itself a great religious act, though it has lapses, sufferings, frustration and other odds; one can easily make this life worthy of fruitful living, if one joins with others in this ceremony of social works, and noble mission of service and sacrifice. Yet he never held that this life is the whole of it.

According to Swami Vivekananda, Jiva is no other than Shiva and hence God-realisation is possible through service of Jiva considering them as Shiva. Swami Vireswarananda has rightly pointed out, "Service rendered to the ignorant, the needy and the suffering as worship of the divine in them, raises secular work to the level of worship and this ultimately leads to God-realisation." 18

Swamiji's views have been beautifully expressed in the following poems: —

Ye fools! Who neglect the living God,
And His infinite reflections with which
the world is full.

18 Swami Vireswarananda: Spiritual Ideals for the modern age, p.57.
While you run after imaginary shadows,
That lead alone to fights and quarrels,
Him worship, the only visible!
Break all other idols! 19

Another poem of Swamiji originally written in Bengali expresses the same view may be referred to here -

"From Highest Brahman to the Yonder woman,
And to the very minutest atom,
 Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love;
Friend, offer mind, soul, body at their feet.
These are His manifold forms before thee,
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?
Who loves all beings without distinction,
He indeed is worshipping best his God" 20

The Non-dualists defined Ultimate Reality in terms of negation - as "not this, not this". But the Upanisads also speak of "Sarvam Khalu idam Brahma" - "All that there is, is nothing but Brahman". Or in other words, Everything is Brahman. Vivekananda had this realisation as well. He said that Whatever

you perceive — all these are His creations. In fact, they are the offshoot of that one soul. To be more precise it is Lord Himself. Instead of denying everything he tells us to see God everywhere and act accordingly. It is, to be noted how Vivekananda has extended the periphery of the concept of Brahman. Brahman is not confined to visible living beings only, it is permeated even in sound or word - "Bhak Bhakam. It is in mind and thoughts of man and all objects of thought.

"This new outlook again opens out a fresh field of inter-human and inter-group relationships. All thoughtful persons are convinced that for a better human society or for that matter, for bringing a universally acceptable One World, we have to rely on the spiritual re-orientation of man's ideas about man and not merely on political make-shifts. Political organisations tend to disintegrate through an interplay of group interests. Nations gather together to forge unity, but fail to achieve this just because they lack faith in actual human equality. To the more favourably posted nations looking at the surface alone, some are intrinsically intelligent, while others are mere masses of flesh and bone; so why not use the latter as common fodder without compunction? Or the latter may have muscular strength with a little bit of intelligence. Well, they are only good for being hewers of wood and drawers of water. Or even with a little higher
intelligence they may have shades of colour other than white, which reveal their inferiority. So why not rule over them? And so humanity acts divided into conflicting groups. What is needed is a total reappraisal of the dignity of the human personality, from which point of view all will appear divine without any high or low. On such a pedestal alone can real unity be forged. And this conception may active faith, is presented to us by Swamiji, through his appeal for worship of the living God. Nations and individuals have to serve or worship the God in the needy and the backward; and in this alone lies the safety, succour and salvation, so necessary today of a divided, disturbed and disintegrating human society."21. How far-seeing and prophetic is this vision? Without this radical change in the outlook of humanity mankind has no future. The prospect of peace and international amity is bleak. Political manoeuvres, pact, treaties, agreement are make-shift attempts to stave off dark groove of destruction and global wars. Where there is no union of hearts based upon spiritual vision of oneness of all created beings which is the basic idea of Advaita Vedanta the hope, everlasting peace and amity will ever remain a mirage - an unattainable idealism. So Advaita Vedanta offers the only solution, the only way to salvation on this side of life, as it is also surely the sole way to spiritual salvation after death with reunion with

21 Swami Gambhirananda: India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture, p.691.
God or Soul. One can easily assert that the birth of 'League of Nations' or U.N.O., is a direct offshoot of Swamiji's preaching, though it is not chronologically related, it is culturally interlinked with Swamiji's message to Chicago. Vedānta may be called the last word on spiritualism and religion of man, which cuts across all barriers between man and man, man and the society and nation, between nation and nation. It affords a direct continuing link with souls of individuals without distinction of class, colour, race, nationality or climes. It is all pervading, all pervasive and all-embracing. Approach is not negative but firmly affirmative and creative. It is not based upon rejection of anything but accepting all, with the exception of what is base, vulgar, petty, narrow, selfish and crippling. It is based upon the ideal of growth, development and expansion. It aims at peace and salvation of mankind in the social national and international activities of all communities.

On the basis of spirituality, we have to erect a new structure suited to the requirements of the modern age. We have to utilise every bit of the material knowledge that modern science has discovered, we have to utilise the power of organisation and resourcefulness of the West and build on the solid rock of spirituality a magnificent civilisation - evolving new economies, new sociology, and new politics.
On this spiritual ideal of the East the structures of the West also have to be fitted. This is the renaissance which the great Swami Vivekananda heralded.

He came with a divine message to deliver unto the world, which was about to be sweft off by the rushing tide of materialism. Swamiji was veritably a pillar of fire to show humanity the way out of the bewildering maze of faithlessness and selfishness to Peace Eternal. He came for all, felt for all and sacrificed for all. "Peace unto mankind" - was his only thought, and this thought made him restless, sleepless, nay almost mad, till he delivered his message and laid the foundation-stone of the edifice of peace in all corners of the earth.

The message is there. But the mission is yet to be fulfilled. It is a legacy we inhere. Humanity has the great responsibility to translate his message of universal peace and concord based upon equality, justice and fairplay not merely in the material concept but the spiritual concept of Vedānta. The vision of civilisation that Swamiji unfolded is the vision of an all-round prospect of society created by the effort of millions of human beings with that limitless capacity and spirit in various fields of activities - scientific, technological and metaphysical or religious, based
upon the spiritual concept of Vedānta.

His message is a challenge to humanity. If we accept it we will survive - materially and spiritually; if we renounce it, we will die physically and spiritually.

Will the humanity care to listen to warning voice? Let those who have ears, let them hear and heed it, for them and for the entire humanity.

Words of caution, warning against impending catastrophe of annihilation and extermination of the world superimposed upon humanity shall hardly have any effect upon their mode of thinking, much too engrossed as they are in political, material aspiration - selfishness, love of power and supremacy. Such warning voice has been uttered by great men through the ages. Individuals have tried to emulate and practise the message of peace but collectively and socially it failed to have any effect. It could not ignite the bonfire of social reconstruction or bring out basic change in human nature and motivation. To what shall we attribute this failure? Failure is rooted in ignorance of man in the Vedāntic truths. Unless humanity becomes steeped with the eternal truths of Vedānta, no amount of physical or material change in society shall enable them to attain the promised goal of peace, prosperity,
and fulfilment here on earth or salvation of and blessedness hereafter. To ensure that peace and salvation we must fall back upon Advaita-Vedanta, Swami Vivekananda.
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