CHAPTER-V

Universal Religion and Practical Vedānta.

VI. The Universalist Thesis: Before going to the depth of Vivekananda's concept of Universal Religion it will be worthwhile for our study to have a look to the various views regarding 'Universal Religion'. Great minds of 19th century have imagined that religion could be a unifying factor in the world and concept of universal religion was a way to gather all humanity under one banner. The Universalist thesis, in recent year associated with the names of Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, has a long pedigree. Not all those who spoke of universal religion and, made claims for Vedānta in this connection were talking about the same thing. Margaret Chatterjee observed, "That all religions are the same, whether in the short or long run, has never been maintained in a crude form. The thesis has always had a certain subtlety. Whatever 'sameness' is under discussion, however, philosopher have regarded the matter as falling within their territory, and there is no doubt the questions concerning 'aspects', 'essence', 'what really is the case' have metaphysical overtones."(1)

One of the earliest exponents of the thesis was Rammohan Roy. The work in which the theme of 'universal religion' was developed were the "Tohufut-ul-Mowahedeen' published in Persia in 1803 and the pamphlet on Universal Religion published in 1829".(2) Raja Rammohan Roy, found that the inhabitants of all countries agreeing generally about the notion of one Being, the source and governor of all that exists. He found that turning towards one Eternal Being is a natural tendency of human mind.

Shiv Nath Shastri summarizes the position thus, "The sumtotal of the Raja's teachings is that the doctrine of the one true God is the universal element in all religions, and as such forms an article of faith of the universal religion of mankind, but the practical application of that universal religion are to be always local and national. As a herald of the new age he held up before
men a new faith which was universal in its sympathies, but whose cardinal principle was that 'the service of man is the service to God.'

Ramachandra Chatterjee spoke of him as believing in pure theism and in the moral Government of the Universe. "He did not reject any truth to be found in any scriptures or in the teaching of any prophet or saint, he revered and accepted truth from all quarters, but the same time he did not accept any book or teacher as infallible." This assessment projects an eclecticism, which would hardly allow for genuine diversity of religious belief, to which he was very sensitive.

With Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa we come to a thinker saint, who stands on the basis of his own religious experience. Any attempt to know his contribution to the theme, 'universal religion' encounters first of all his attempt to enter into the spirit of different religions. The famous passage in which the 'same goal' of the Universalist thesis occurs is following.

"As one and the same material, viz, water is called by different names by different peoples-one calling it 'water', another 'vari', a third 'acqua' and another 'pani', even so the one sat-chit-ananda (Satcitananda) the everlasting Intelligent Bliss, is invoked by some as God, by some as Allah, by same as Hari and by others as Brahman"

Radhakrishnan's 'universalism' is based on two main planks. One is, metaphysical stand point which could be described as modified Vedantism. Another is a conviction, based on his work in the national and international spheres, of the need for bringing into a world consciousness which will be able to overcome differences of nationality, religion etc. The thesis in its most provocation from is to be found in the Hindu view of life', where he claims that the Vedanta is "not a religion, but religion itself in it's most universal and deepest significance." Radhakrishnan stated that the religion of the future is likely to be contemplative one. A religion of essence, purged of 'formal structure', which is indistinguishable from Vedanta. For him Vedanta is not a religion, but religion in its most universal and deepest significance. Radhakrishnan claims, for Vedanta a core or essence status not only within Hinduism but among the family of religions.
Anni Besant's Theosophical society made frequent use of the phrase 'universal religion' in their publication. She defined it as the common doctrines of all religions, that which has been believed everywhere.

The Universalist thesis presents, a particularly Indian response to the fact of religious pluralism. Gandhi believes that men see truth in fragments. This prevents us from the kind of universalism which advocates a single 'aspect of truth' in the name of universal truth. This is what he says, "Does not God Himself appear to different individuals in different aspects? Still we know that He is one. But truth is the right designation of God. Hence there is nothing wrong in everybody following truth according to his lights."(7)

Rabindranath Tagore developed his conception of religion which combined some elements of Brahmo Samaj with some elements of orthodox Hinduism. Tagore explicitly believes that religion cannot be confined to any group or sect or tribe or nation. Man picks up that particular form of religion that suits him. But in the final analysis religion transcends all such particular forms. To him religious experience most certainly had an aesthetic dimension that overflowed all boundaries of creed-or even of cultural allegiance. He believed 'unity at the roof of things'. In 'The Religion of Man' he writes, "there dwells the eternal spirit Eternal Spirit of human unity beyond all our knowledge"(8) Above all he believed in a spiritual kinship of mankind which was universal.

Sri Aurobindo's universalism is yet again different. He shared both Raja Ramamohan Roy's thought and world soul concept of Radhakrishnan. He has great hopes of India's role in commonwealth of nation. He stated, "It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the eternal religion which will harmonize all religious sciences and philosophers and make mankind one soul"(9)

V.2 Transcendental Unity of Religions: "We see that the apparent contradiction and perplexities in every religion mark but different stages of growth. The end of all religions is the realization of God in the soul. That is one Universal religion"(10) (Vivekananda,)
All through his discourses and lectures Vivekananda was always motivated by an intense search of unity among the diverse views, theories and dogmas of religion. For him all different sectarian systems radiate from one central idea of unity. It is a fact of history that various religious organization, quarrelling against each other to show that their own view has right to live on ground. Their doctrines and faiths are superior to other's religious view. As a result we find that almost in all religions there are some major and minor sects continued to live. Such as the case with the shiahs and sunnis of Mohammedan, Catholic and protestant of the Christian. In Hinduism we observe that there are three major sects, Saivism, Vaishnavism and Saktism. Further they are followed by various major and minor sects and particular way of worship. As far as the internal and external conflicts become prominent, the each sect grows vitally. It appears to Vivekananda very significant and he observed that all the perplexities and contradictions are apparent and they don't affect the vitality of religion. For him contradiction of view is noting but the stages of development of our thought. Unity in diversity is the plane of universe. For Vivekananda differences among the religions seem more permanent because we donot know basic truth or essence of own religion. With a superficial view of our own, we contradict our own from other's religion. There is a common element in all religious experience. Among all religions, there is a common foundation, on which particular religious belief and way of worship are build. For Vivekananda, there is a transcendent unity among various religions, which can not be realized with a narrow look out. In essence all religions are one. What all religions teach us that to realize the divinity of our soul. Every religion tries to give us a conception of a superior God. Existence of all human spirit, life and matter, ultimately deviate from it.

Vivekananda never disadmits the varities of opinions. The unity exists in variety. For him all religions are at bottom alike. Every religion seeks God and wants salvation for aspirants. Vivekananda states that human beings struggle for freedom. We seek neither misery nor happiness, but freedom. This one aim is the secret of the insatiable thirst of man. All religions pave the
way or cultivate the ground for freedom. Hence, all religions are at bottom one.

Vivekananda opined that transcendentally all religions are alike. There is already transcendental unity among the religions. What contradicts one religion from other is nothing but superficial religious codes, doctrines, dogmas and religious practices. All religions from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, are really many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the infinite. As such, every religion is true and authentic in its own way. Every religion seeks God and wants to realize God. In other words aspirants of every religion seek to realize divinity. Vivekananda explains, "The proof of one religion depends on the proof of the rest. For instance, if I have six fingers, and one else has, you may well say that it is abnormal. You would not think that my hand was the true intent of nature, but rather that it was abnormal and diseased. The same reasoning may be applied to the argument that only one religion is true and all others false. One religion only, like one set of six fingers in the world, would be unreal. We see, therefore, that if one religion is true, all others must be true. There are differences in non-essentials, but in essentials they are all one. If my five fingers are true, they prove that your five fingers are true too."(11)

All religions are true, according to Vivekananda, from the standpoint of purusartha or value. Because, God realization is the primary purpose of all religion, everything else is secondary. Every religion may have its own nomenclature and unique way of expressing the idea of God realization. The difference is only in language. The fact remains that every religion has its goal, to transcend the limit of the senses and to contact the reality lying beyond. Further all religions are equally true from the standpoint of tattva or metaphysical ideal. Because there is only one ultimate reality which manifests itself in various forms (or even as formless). It is known by various names. To be precise transcendentally or metaphysically all religions are equally true. Above all superficial expressions, there is transcendental unity of religions.

In the same vain in West William Law, in his "The spirit of prayer" makes out that differences of religion are on the surface. "There is but one possible way for man to attain this salvation, of life of God in the soul. There is
not one for the Jew, another for a Christian and a third for the heathen. No; God is one, human nature is one, salvation is one”(12)Vivekananda compared the aspirant to the young eagle and the Reality or God to the glorious blazing sun. The ways and methods are different but the goal is the same, the blazing sun. To him all the religions, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the infinite. Every soul is young eagle soaring higher and higher, till it reaches the glorious sun.

For Vivekananda "all religions are equally true." It becomes incomprehensible to many people. Because we know that religion itself is a complex phenomena mixed up with cultural, social, linguistic, economic and political factors. Islam lays emphasis on universal brotherhood, Hinduism on spirituality, Christianity on self-purification for entering into the heaven of freedom. Vivekananda recognized the necessities of varieties. Vivekananda identified religion primarily with spirituality, not with external observances. Religion is not a mere attitude or faith. Religion is realization. It is only at the level of transcendental experience, the statement, 'all religions are equally true' can be understood and appreciated.

Sometime we say that the direct mystic experience is the sole criterion of religion. Many social tinkers have held that religion is primarily a social phenomenon. What must have led them to this conclusion is the fact that word religion as it exist today are inseparably bound up with social institution. If religion is identified with only transcendental experience, millions of people, indeed the majority of mankind should be said to have no religion at all. It should be remembered however, that not every thing associated with religion can be called "religious expression". There are general expressions of religion such as sculptures, rituals, temples, monasticism, etc. But the belief, practices, observances, these things are different from one religion to another religion. Then obviously the question arises "How can every religion be true? Vivekananda anticipated this question and replied, "We must learn that truth may be expressed in a hundred thousand ways, and that each of these way is true a far as it goes. We learn that the same thing can be viewed from hundred different standpoints, and yet be the same thing.”(13) Vivekananda
more beautifully expressed this position by taking instance of the sun. Suppose a man standing on the earth looks at every stage of his journey, until he reaches the sun. The photograph of each stage will be seen to be different from those of other stages. When he gets back, he brings with him so many photographs of so many different suns. Yet we know that the same sun was photographed by the man at the different stages of his progress. Even so is it with the god. Every vision of truth that man has, is a vision of Him none else. God is like the water, filling in different vessels, and in each vessel the vision of God comes in the form of the vessel. Christianity calls it God, Mohammedan Allah, Hindu Iswara, Zoroastrianism calls at Ahura Mazda, Judaism calls it Jehovah. All through the various names, God is one, eternal reality. These various names are mere expressions or symbols of finite minds leveled on the same reality or God. In every religion “He is” the same God, only the method, practices and way of expressions are different.

In the parliament of religion in Chicago (1893, 15th September) Vivekananda declared to the delegates of the various religions, that there is nothing to disagree among the various opinion of religion from oriental and occidental...

When we look with a narrow out look, within the barrier of our own religion, we find that our own religion is superior to others. Only our own religion can lead us to nearer to God. Salvation becomes possible if we practice various religious practices of my own religion as upheld by own scripture or own prophet. Such kind of attitude was compared by Him, to a frog living in his own well and thinking his well is the biggest then any other else. He states, “I am a Hindu sitting in my own little well. The Christian sits in his little well and thinks the whole world is his well. The Mohammedan sits in his little well and thinks that is the whole world.” (14) We have to break down the barriers of this little world of ours, and to show respect to others view, as all are discovering the same truth of the eternal.

By various simile and description Vivekananda repeatedly wanted to show and establish the one truth that is “Transcendental unity of religions”, transcendentally religions are united, superficially they are parted from one another. If we observe all major religions of the world, we find that, recognition of a transcendental supreme. The freedom of the human as a manifestation of
the supreme and the unity of mankind as the goal of history are foundations of the major religions. All dogmas, rites and practices are just inadequate symbolism to focus fundamental truth of religions. We live in an age of tension, and danger of ignoring other’s view for their insufficiencies which can further lead us to a state of world conflict. What is lacking in our attitude, definitely tolerance and deep vision of searching truth. Vivekananda repeatedly stated that we have to transform our attitude from narrowness to deep inner truth, that all religions are different ways to the same God.

Such vastness of attempt of Vivekananda reminds us Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who looked for a great vision of human fellowship. He says, “Western and Indian philosophies must not contend in the spirit that aims at one proving itself right in opposition to the other. Both must be moving towards a way of thinking which shall eventually be shared in common by all mankind.” Hence, all religions are friends and partners in the pursuit of spiritual life. In the adventure of searching God, all religions are bound together in a healthy partnership to advance the cause of peace, justice and freedom.

When Vivekananda asserts the transcendental unity of religions he never meant that they are same in all respects. Certainly they are not. Each religion has a special base, a characteristic, a unique trait. We have to recognize and identify such unique characterization. He explains, “I don’t mean that the different buildings languages, rituals, books, etc employed in various religions, but I mean the internal soul of every religion. Every religion has a soul behind it, and that soul may differ from the soul of another religion.” For instance, the dominant character of Islam is it’s spirit of equality and brotherhood. The Christianity gives emphasis on love and sacrifice exemplified by Christ, Buddhism stress on renunciation, compassion and rationality. In Hinduism we find it’s principle of basic unity of the universe in consciousness, insistence on the much for direct mystical experience, the spirit of acceptance and it’s extraordinary power of assimilation. According to Vivekananda we should identify and highlight these basic truths of other religion and further we should accept these truths. Vivekananda pointed out in
no uncertain terms that ceremonies and forms are not the essence of religion, but realization of higher life.

In Vivekananda's religion supreme love is always motivated by the love of humanity. True religion transcends all physical limits and sings the glory of humanity, serves humanity. In a humanist eye, all human beings are equal, no matter of caste, creed, nation or religion arises. Similarly all religions bearing some portion of a greater truth, and hence all religion are equally true. From Vivekananda's part, there was not any irrational favour and compulsion for any religion. By realizing religion he states we have to reach assimilation and unity with whole mankind.

Vivekananda identified the vision of various prophets of various religions, who sang the glory of God and one's struggle to cross his temporal cage of mortal body with instance urge to merge in one eternal. All religions are actually like the different kind of oil in different lamps. But when they burn, we have the same flame and illumination. All jarrings and creakings of the machines of thought, lead us to unity. In the same zeal with Vivekananda R.G. Collingwood writes, "Above all these jarrings and creaking of the machine of thought there is a melody sung in unison by the spirits of the spheres which are great philosophers. This melody is not a body of truth revealed once for all, but a living thought whose content, never discovered for the first time, is progressively determined and clarified by every genuine thinker".\(^{(17)}\)

Sri Ramakrishna confined the same truth of unity of religions, in a most remarkable way by practicing various religious disciplines and attaining same ultimate God-consciousness through them all. It is true that he was not in every case practiced all the rituals of a particular religion, he need not to do so. All barriers were removed by his overwhelming love of God. Barriers exist only in the sense bound world. There are no fences to be crossed and rituals to be gone through when the mystics transcend the sense. It establishes a direct contact with supreme reality. Sri Ramakrishna later told his disciples, "I have practiced all religion-Hinduism Islam, Christianity and I have also followed the path of the different Hindu sects. I have found that it is the same God toward whom all are directing their steps, though along different
Vivekananda realized the tremendous potential of the message that emanated from Sri Ramakrishna’s life and he presented the message before the world as the best commentary on the elevating, life giving principle of Vedanta, the religion beyond religions.

It is often stated that all great men think alike. Same unity of religion echoes in the various writings of Radhakrishnan, Kabir and Buddha. Kabir, the 15th century apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity, said, “The Hindu God lives at Banaras, the Muslim God at Mecca. But He who made the world, lives not in a city made by hands. There is one father of Hindu and Muslim, one God in all matter.”

Buddha was opposed to all such thought that had closed system of thought. He insisted that his followers should concentrate on the way leading to enlightenment. If we adopt definite view, we get concerned about defending them. This leads to disputation with rival doctrines, resulting in pride. According to Buddha true seer has to shake off all views. Having no view to defend, no prejudice to plead, he is free from doctrinarism. Vivekananda states, “He (Buddha) had the brain, the power and the heart—a heart as infinite as the broad sky. He did not want any power over anyone, and he wanted to break the mental and spiritual bonds of men.”

Both Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan dwells more on the spirit of loyalty to all religions. In this context Radhakrishnan recommends the spirit of fellowship in the place of their amalgam and fusion. Radhakrishnan states, “The different religious traditions call the one Reality in various images and
they could embrace and fertilize each other so as to give mankind a many
sided- perfection, the spiritual radiance of Hinduism the faithful obedience of
Judaism, the life of beauty of Greek paganism, the noble compassion of
Buddhism, the vision of divine love of Christianity and the spirit of resignation
to the sovereign lord of Islam^21)

In the same vain Vivekananda states, that we all are realizing the same
truth. But we are colouring the truth with our own heart, understanding it with
our mind. We can only know as much of truth as is related to us.. This makes
the difference between man and man, yet we all belong to the same great
universal truth.

Vivekananda states that all religions are but different landing to the
same goal. It requires no little effort on the part of men to this. Religion as it is
practiced is altogether different from religion, as it should be practiced. Each
sect wants to prove that other sects only preach nonsense. Vivekananda
declares the equal status of all religions of the world and tries to establish
unity of religion. Here, he is motivated by our old-age philosophy of Vedanta.
Vedanta assets all are Brahman. Equality to all beings is the key note of
Vedanta philosophy. Vivekananda states, “It is true that the Upanisads have
the one theme before them. "What is that knowing which we know everything
else? In modern language, the theme of Upanis is to found an ultimate
unity of things knowledge is nothing but finding unity in the midst of diversity.
Every sciences based open this"......Similarly In Rg. Veda we find, Ekam sat,
Vipra bahudha vadant^.

(22) “Truth is one sages state it many” The harmony of
all religion which is accomplished by Vivekananda, was the theme of his life’s
mission. With the debut of Vivekananda in Chicago the tide turned and the
east, particularly Indian, asserted itself in the cultural and spiritual spheres.
The message of Vivekananda was positive, all embracing and Universal. The
parliament of Religion was organized as part of the 400th anniversary
celebration of discovery of America. The organizers wanted to make it on
occasion for a world wide declaration of the superiorly of American
achievement in every sphere including Christianity. It was their fond hope that
parliament of Religions would provide the platform where Christianity would
be proclaimed as the greatest religion. Vivekananda’s appearance turned the
table as it were, with the result that the final outcome was the declaration that all religions are different paths, ultimately leading to the same goal. With a scholastic vision Vivekananda goes deeply through the voices of the sages of his own country, light showed by Buddha, ancient religions of the Egypt, Babylon, China and the religion that existed in America. At last he has reached in fusion, that all religions are, at bottom the struggle of the finite human being to transcend the limitation of the senses. The empirical fact of the philosophy of religions, and each with its own peculiar character and structure, should not hide from us the transcendental unity of religion. According to Vivekananda, the 'Eternal' is purest in the each soul of man as it's secret ground and all religion forms a bridge between the limited and infinite Universal religion. Vivekananda, offered his ideal view of religion for mankind which can be attributed as universal religion because it is based on a all pervasive fact that end of all religions is the realization of God in the soul. Vivekananda's assertion of transcendental unity of religions or "all religions are of equal status", opened a new channel of thought in his mind for a religion, beyond all religions. The etymology of the word religion also indicates that religion is to bind men together in one thread. We have found that religions of the world both agree and differ amongst themselves on several points. People of saintly nature have emphasized the similarities, for promoting understanding and good will. Differences among religions are quite normal in the view of various social and cultural traditions prevalent in the world. It is a hard fact that religion has been one of the most striking causes of strain and struggle amongst different peoples of the world. But difference are more conspicuous on the level of practices rather then of belief. Each religious sect has claimed itself exclusively right and its own organizations, own doctrines are superior to others. Fanatics have been always highlighting the differences and as a result bitter hatred among the religious group, internal and external conflicts paralyzing the actual role of religion. Vivekananda was aware of the fact that instead of binding, religions have more divided the society. Vivekananda describes the pathetic situation, which emerges out of misunderstanding of religion, very beautifully, "Nothing has made brotherhood of man more tangible than religion, nothing has made more bitter enmity between man and men than religion; nothing has built more
charitable institutions, more hospitals for man and even for animals than religion; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion." (23) This fact appears to Vivekananda very significant. The simple fact is that there is cultural diversity of humanity and stupendous variety of individual, temperaments but no single religion, existing, assembled, or expected can satisfy the spiritual or cultural needs of all people in the world. Attempt to tie down the whole humanity to one set of custom, belief rituals, common philosophy and theology seems too absurd or impractical. But Vivekananda repeatedly reminds us the fact that conflict are only apparent, they don't effect the core essence of religion. Under such circumstances and influence of his master, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Vivekananda dreamt a universal religion for whole mankind. Vivekananda in his lecture on "My Master" said, "The second idea that I learnt from my master, and which is perhaps the most vital, is the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic. They are but various phases of the eternal religion. The one eternal religion, is applied to the opinion of various minds and various races. There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion; there never existed many religions, there is only the one. One infinite religion existed al through eternity and will ever exist, and this religion is expressing itself in various countries in various ways" (24) Here, we have to keep it mind that all through his life Vivekananda was basically influenced by Vedanta. He treated every problem from the standpoint of Vedanta and reached solution by the guidelines of Vedanta. But, to some extent he oriented some vedantic principles without cutting root from it. Hence Vivekananda's ideal of universal religion is rooted in Vedanta.

V. 3 Vivekananda's way to the realization of universal religion:

Vivekananda proposed for a universal religion which is outcome of his genuine scholastic study of various religious scripture of his own and other's religion. He was liberal and reasonable in every step of his proposal. Previous study reflects us that his Vedānta was the cornerstone of all his thought. All the time he was guided by reason, analysis, comparison and deep penetration on the matter. Though spirituality bears always with it a transcendental
element, yet Vivekananda in all his discussion and thought avoided strict philosophical elements, so that it can be easily conceivable in empirical plane. He redirected Vedanta from strict philosophical principle to practical life and hence he was known as neo-vedantist and equally a practical vedantist. Vivekananda's concept of universal religion, is not something like 'A' of Christianity, B of Hinduism and C of Islam and sum total of all these. It is not a new religion preached by Vivekananda with new religious dogmas and rituals. Before directly going to the question of "which one of existing religion an be regarded as universal religions", Vivekananda, discussed the characteristics, outlook of an universal religion; along with what kind mind set and attitude we have to develop to be aspirant of universal religion.

Vivekananda observed that, various thinkers of various religion attempted to prove implicitly or explicitly the supremacy of their own religion in respect of the fact that it contains elements which makes it most efficient to serve as a universal religion. For example, George Galloway in his book philosophy of religion expresses the view, "Christianity contains within it all such elements in the most efficient manner which may make a religion universal....only that religion may be taken as universal which touches the inner soul of man and which goes beyond all distinctions of class or group such that the ways of deliverance pointed out by it are applicable to all, and not to only a few of a particular class or group"(25) According to Vivekananda it is quite dogmatic, if any one try to show his own religion supreme and universal. For him no religion is really sectarian in its outlook. Message of every religion is universal, though only a few people can adopt the actual message of it. Vivekananda wrote, "....leaving aside dogmatic study, and taking a common sense view of the thing, we find at the start that there is tremendous life power in all great religions of the world.....Now, those of you that watch the movement of religious thought all over the world are perfectly aware that not one of the great religions of the world has died not only so, each one of them is progressive....If what the modern scientist say is true, that the survival of the fittest is the test, these religions proved by their still living that they are yet fit for some people. There is a reason why they should live, they bring good to many."(26) In Vivekananda's view every religion is
great, and serving for the welfare of the humanity. Vivekananda’s universality is rooted in his experience of the spiritual oneness of existence. It is not due simply to his intellectual comprehension, extensive knowledge and keen interest in human values and world wide sympathy or fellow feeling. It is different in character from humanism, humanitarianism and universalism. All of these value man, as man, irrespective of creed, colour rank or position. Their highest conception of man is from empirical view point. But Vivekananda sees God dwelling in human forms. To his spiritual vision man’s real self is ever pure, free, immortal and divine. The same supreme being, pure consciousness, dwells within each psychological organism as the conscious self more or less manifest. In human individuals he shines distinctly as the knowing self. This universal truth which is found by Vivekananda, have been declared by the World’s oldest religious literature, Upanisad or the Vedanta. Vivekananda has interpreted Vedanta in modern terms in view of modern problems. In doing so he has built a bridge between the ancient and modern, between the East and West. Today the world is in dire need of a universal message and a comprehensive view of life both of which Vivekananda has provided.

Vivekananda discussed the way to the realization of a universal religion. in one of his lecture delivered in the Universalist church, Pasadena, California on 28th January 1900. This lecture can be regarded as the prelude to the way to realization of a universal religion. Vivekananda was very liberal in his thinking, that all religions are expression of the same truth. No religion is more great then another. This is a fact in present history of the human race, that all these great religions exist and are spreading and multiplying. Vivekananda accepted the variety of sect in respect of religion because it indicates the variety of human thought. He was so reasonable in acceptance of variety it can be inferred from following few lines, "I and all who are present here were to think exactly the same thought, there would be no thoughts for us to think. We know that two or more forces must come into collision in order to produce motion. It is the clash of thoughts, the differentiation of thoughts, that awakens thought. Now, if we all thought alike, we would be like Egyptian mummies in a museum looking vacantly at one another's faces no more than
Whirls and eddies occur only in a rusting, living stream. If there are no whirlpools, then the river is dead. Similarly when religions are dead, there will be no more sects. As long as mankind thinks, there will be sects in religion. Without various sects, it will be the perfect peace and harmony of the grave. For Vivekananda variation is the sign of life and it must exist. He was liberal and practical in every step of his thought. He showed equal respect to different opinions and he accepted varieties equally true. According to Vivekananda different religions are not contradictory, they are supplementary. In its secondary aspects, such as languages, rituals, books, celebrations, one religion is different from another. Obviously the question arises, how can all the verities of religion be true? If one thing is true, its negation is false? How can contradictory opinions be true at the same time? Vivekananda observed the true soul of every religion, and found that each religion takes up one part of the great universal truth and spend its whole force in embodying and typifying that part of the great truth. According to Vivekananda, various truths of different religions are not exclusion from one another but addition to find out greater truth. System after system arises, each one embodying a great idea, and ideals must be added to ideals. Every religion is a march of humanity to catch higher and higher truth. Some time we know also that there may be almost contradictory point of view of the same thing, but they will all indicate the same thing. The truth is the same, but we colour the truth with our own heart and understanding. Every religion can know much of truth it able to receive. This makes the difference between religion and religion and occasions sometimes even contradictory ideas, yet all belong to the same great universal truth.

So far Vivekananda universality of religion does not point to the existence of one religion in the world over as the sole savior of the rest. It means the peaceful co-existence of all religions. It is to be achieved by mutual understanding and appreciation and reverent attitude towards one another. Eclecticism aims to select the best out of every religion and combine them into a consistent whole. It may present something as attractive as a banquet of flowers. But this cannot grow having no root in the soil of life. The electric method was tried in the past but failed. But in Vivekananda's view the
differences have deep meaning to meet the requirement of the seekers of different capabilities and temperaments. With all their differences religion should live together harmoniously.

Different religious sects are accepted by Vivekananda, "I want sects to multiply in every country, that more people may have a chance to be spiritual. Do not think that people don't like religion. I don't believe that. The preacher cannot give them what they need. The same man that may have been branded as an atheist, as a materialist, or what not, way meet a man who gives him the truth needed by him, and he may turn out the most spiritual man in the community."(28) Various little sects are out come human brains. But the blunder, lies in the fact that, the little sects, born within a few hundred years out of fallible human brains, making this arrogant claim of knowledge of the infinite truth. According to Vivekananda, each religion represents a great truth and represents a particular excellence. But it is shallowness of us to think that we can change the minds of the whole human race in a few years with this excellence. His attitude was broad enough to accept every variety with its particular excellence. In his view, no religion can claim that it is quite enough to show the humanity the light of God or light of truth. As the world is full with various types of mind and various types of needs accordingly and hence various religious sects are like different types of food for all these minds as their necessity. In this regard Vivekananda used a very beautiful simile, "We can eat only in our own way. For instance, we Hindus eat with our fingers. Our fingers are suppler than your's, you cannot use your fingers the same way. Not only the food should be supplied, but it should be taken in your own particular way."(29)

Vivekananda has observed that some people have insisted that only their religion is true and all other religions are false. As such, their religion is the only universal religion. Some experts have claimed that, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam can be regarded as universal religion. Because these religion can touch the inner soul of man which goes beyond all distinctions of class or group in offering its way of salvation. It is well known that each of these three religions has made this claim. Buddha, Christ and Mohammed expressly asked their disciples and followers to spread their message all over
the world. Founders, missionaries have over the centuries combed the earth seeking adherents and saving them. Indeed, in their fanatical zeal to gain more converts, individual ambitions, organizational pressure, political and economic consideration seem to have often got the upper hand over the apparently pious desire to save the soul of a heathen. These conversions have almost always deprived the new converts of the security and nourishment they earlier derived from their own culture, social customs and traditions, without providing them with suitable substitutes.

So far none of these three religions has actually become universal, because other religions still exist and are, in fact thriving. But it is true that together these three command the allegiance of the majority of mankind today. As compared to them, the followers of Hinduism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism and other religion numerically form a minority. But the question arises, ‘Will Buddhism or Christianity or Islam ever be able to vanquish all other religions and be the only religion in the world?’ It requires no big genius to answer this question in the plain negative, however much unpalatable and unbearable this may be to some people.

According to Vivekananda, here are at least three reasons why none of these become a universal religion. The first reason is that their claim to universality is based, not on universal principles but on the naive belief that only of them is true and the rest are false. There by they really cancel one another’s claim to universality. The second reason is that none of these religions, even in its present ‘non-universal state’ is an undivided whole. Every one of them is in reality an unorganized bunch of numerous sects and dominations, each claiming to be the only true representative of the faith says. The third reason why none of these religions can become universal is that each of them is conditioned by the symbols, rituals, myths and other elements of the parent culture from which it is originated. This is a great stumbling block. Principles can be universal, but persons, never. Even so is the case of symbols, rituals and myths. So we come to the inevitable conclusion that none of the existing religion can, in its present form, command the allegiance of the whole humanity and become the universal religion.
Another view regarding universal religion is that it must be constituted with the elements common, to all the existing religions. In spirit of the diversity and differences between religions, no one can deny that they do share certain common characteristics. Some are of the opinion that after identifying these common features it may be possible to combine them to form a universal religion acceptable to all. This is just only reasonable from theoretical ground. Practically, of course, there are two insurmountable hurdles on the way. First off, who is going to constitute this new universal religion. It is still more unrealistic to expect that everyone of the world over would be happy with the newly manufactured religion. It is impossible to assume that the majority of mankind accepts this newly assembled religion. The second hurdle is regarding the symbols, rituals and myths. We cannot pick them at random from the existing ones and expect a unanimous approval. Symbols, rituals, myths cannot be invented through discussion and debates, for they are products, that spontaneously of every race. If we decide to drop them off altogether from new ‘universal religion’, cherished product would be neither universal nor a religion.

Vivekananda realized the practical impossibility to bring together the people of even single nation on issue of culture, economy, politics, not to say anything about religion itself. It is a childish hope to bring the whole world together under a single religious ideology by borrowing elements from all religions. So it is better to say that the idea of assembling in this way a new religion which would be universally acceptable is Utopian.

Yet another view regarding universal religion is that it has got to be a brand new religion, not a hotchpotch of elements borrowed from different religions. “It is the belief that saw the birth of a new religion in Iran in the middle of the nineteenth century Bahaism, as it is called (after its founder Baha‘u’llah), has not become a ‘universal religion yet and has shown little promise of becoming one, notwithstanding some of very lofty teachings. It has become and shall remain just one of the many religions in the world. And that, surely, is going to be the fate of every new religion laying claim to universality.”
The plain fact is that the cultural diversity of humanity and stupendous variety of individual temperaments are so much that no single religion existing, assemble or expected- can satisfy the spiritual and cultural needs of all people in the world. It is just impossible to think that we can tie down the whole of humanity to one set of customs, beliefs, rituals and a common philosophy and theology.

We have seen that the view so far described are either absurd or impracticable or both. Then the question arises, 'Is universal religion then, one may wander, only a concept which would never become a reality any time? A clear and authentic answer to this question was provided by Sri Ramakrishna, which can be regarded as the greatest contribution to the modern world. Sri Ramakrishna showed through his life that universal religion is not merely a concept, but a reality-and not a distant reality either. Universal religion is real-here and now. There is no need to constitute a religion with the elements common to existing ones. There is no need to create or wait for a brand new religion. Universal religion already exists. It is the one religion with a capital R. All other are religion with a small r. universal religion is already the Religion beyond all religions. All religions are only different expressions of this religion and these expressions are essentially neither contradictory nor antagonistic to one another. In his lecture, on 'My Master' Vivekananda said, “The second idea that I learnt from my Master, and which is perhaps the most vital, is the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic. They are but various phases of the eternal 'Religion'. That one eternal ‘Religion is applied to the different planes of existence, is applied to the opinions of various minds and various races. There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion; there never existed many religions, there is only the one. One infinite Religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and this religion is expressing itself in various countries in various ways.”

Universal religion does not mean a new religion, but the co-existence of all religions in a spirit of give and take. It is physically impossible to stop the world wide preaching of religions. We have to either live with this disturbance or learn to rise about it. Those who rise above it enter the realm of the religion
beyond religions. Whether everyone will be able to enter this realm simultaneously, no one can say. According to Vivekananda, religion beyond religions us provides us with that ‘open-air freedom’ through which we love all and hate none. We accept all and reject none. We respect all and condemn none. By ‘religion beyond religions’ Vivekananda means the Vedânta, or by Vedânta he means ‘the’ religion beyond all religions.

Today world is fade up with bloodshed, commercialism and materialism in every sphere of life. The greed and ambition of modern commercialism is stupendous. The message of Vivekananda, through universal religion is to present age to spread good will and love to all. The fundamental principle of his universal religion is to try to spread good will and love to all. We have to kill away your selfishness and greed ambitions. All through his life he taught us to abandon greed, selfishness which are our greatest enemy. Only material prosperity and material pleasure can degrade us from greatest being to the world to lowest one. Vivekananda’s thought and deeds always worked to show harmony among the existing religions and to create the sense that, Mohammedan, Hindu, Christian all are brothers. We all are worshiping the same God and towards the same goal, but the method or form or name (which Vivekananda regarded as external part of religion) is different. As ‘all the road leads to Rome’ all religions lead to same spiritual unity through all individual, matter and life. In Vivekananda’s opinion good will, harmony of religions, spiritual unity of all beings, are the outcome of Vedanta. Vedanta is the fountain source to deluge the world to wipe all kinds of mischief in the name of religion.

Realization occupies a vital part in Vivekananda’s conception of religion. According Vivekananda fundamental basis of all religions are belief in the soul which is the real man and something beyond both mind and matter. The soul uses the mind as an instrument and through it affects the body. The nature of man is pure and holy but it is candid. In every religion, every soul is trying to regain its own nature. In his words, “I am a spirit and not matter”, we have to realize this. This realization is one of the vital aspects of his concept of universal religion. He wrote, “We see that apparent contradictions and perplexities in every religion mark but different stages of growth. The end of
all religion is the realization of God in the soul. That is one universal religion."\(^{32}\) Hence, Vivekananda argued that religion does not consist in doctrines or dogmas. It is not what we read or what dogmas we believe. That is importance what we realize. Men cannot be religious by mumbling of words. External forms were not—ultimate necessities for religion. The power of attaining God is within every individual. In his realization, human being live and move in God. Religious books can never make religions but religion make book. The end of all religion is the realization of God in the soul. This is the one universal religion. In his view one universal truth in all religions that is realizing God. Ideals and methods of various religions may differ from one another but the central point of all religion is the same, that is realization of God. In this addition he stated, "A man may have never entered a church or a mosque, nor performed any ceremony, but if he feels God within himself and their by lifted above the varieties of the world’s that man may be called as a holly religious man".\(^{33}\)

Religion is to be realized. To become religious one can start without any religion. We have to realize things. See things for ourselves. Realization of religion is the only way. Each one of us will to discover it for ourselves. The great books like Bible, Koran, Vedas are the maps of a particular religion to have conception of them. Just like watching map of England we have get help in forming some sort of conception of England. But when we will reach England, we will have great difference between the map and the country itself. This shows the difference between realization and scriptures. The values of religious books are like the gateway to a country. But actual religion is realization of God.

Vivekananda stated that we are all human beings. Some are black men, some are white but all are belonged to humanity. Various are our faces. No two alike yet we all are human beings. Where is this one humanity? We may not find it when we try to grasp it and to actualize it. Yet we know certainly that there is 'humanity' which is common to us all. So it is with the universal religion, which runs through all the various religions of the world in the form of God. It must and does exist through eternity. Religions are the different pearls and the Lord is the thread that runs through all of them. Only
the majority of mankind are entirely unconscious of it. On the way to realize a universal religion Vivekananda stress more on religious harmony and acceptance. Vivekananda accepted every good notion of every religion. Acceptance was his watch word Tolerance bears a negative meaning to him. For him Bible, the Vedas, the koran and all other sacred books are many passage of spiritual revelation, with the same vision, ‘search of reality’. Vivekananda recommends the positive acceptance to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present and future.

In the preview of his ideal universal religion Vivekananda, looked upon a very practical problem that, “If there ever is going to be an ideal religion (Universal), it must be broad and large enough to supply food for all these minds.”[34] We know that there are various grades of mind. some one may be a rationalist, some one may be very emotional kind of person, or some one a mystic who wants to analyze his own self. There are thousands and thousands of varieties of minds and inclinations. A through generalization of them though not possible, but Vivekananda for practical purpose characterized them into four classes. He divided human individual into four groups as active workers, emotional man, mystic person and philosopher who wants to weigh everything by intellect. It is the uniqueness of Vivekananda’s thought and plane that he wanted to propagate a religion that will equally acceptable to all mines. Universal religion must be equally conducive to action, knowledge and emotion. His view of ideal universal religion should be harmoniously balanced in all these four directions so that it can provide the food of the soul to each kind of individual. It is very significant that in no other religious thinker we find such attempt to provide mental food to all types of person. It happens only to Vivekananda’s thought.

V.4. Vedānta, the universal religion:

So from a close analysis of Vivekananda’s ideal of universal religion, it is reflected that, when he dreamt for a universal religion, he had some characteristic of Universal Religion in his mind. First of all an ideal universal religion must admit the harmony of all religions because all are search of same spirit in the name of God, Allah, Iswara or so on. All religions express the same truth from different standpoint. It respects and accepts all religions
belief and practices with great reverence. For Vivekananda variation is the sign of life.

Then he focused on another point. Universal religion just sings the glory of latent divinity every individual and the aim of human life is to realize this divinity. Recognition of oneness is another key note of his ideal religion. This 'oneness' can be analyses in two respects. Ideal universal religion must teach us oneness with the whole universe. But at the same time, in manifestation, these differences must always remain. In our work, energies and in their manifestation in outside, these difference must always remain. To be an aspirant of universal religion, we have to recognize the natural necessity of variation. We must recognize variation. We must learn that truth may be expressed in a hundred thousand ways. Each of these ways is true as far as it goes. We must learn that the same thing can be viewed from a hundred different stand points, and yet the same thing.

One must make conscious efforts to see the thread connecting all religions forming a beautiful garland adoring the Supreme Being, who is neither Hindu, nor a Christian, nor a Muslim, nor a Buddhist, nor belonging to any religion whatsoever. All are belong to Him, but He transcends all. The only way that the Supreme Being, who is called by various names and conceived in various forms or even as formless, can be encountered is through realization or mystical experience. It is only through this transcendental dimension of religion that the unification of all religions into one universal religion can be really understood. Religion is 'realization' and not merely 'a set of belief'. This point needs to be stressed in the modern world. And here, in particular, comes the importance of the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna, the architect of Vivekananda.

The most significant feature of his ideal universal religion, that it must embrace different types of mind. The ideal religion must care for maintaining each person's individuality. In his view, that plan alone is practical which does not destroy the individuality of any man in religion. At the same time shows him a point of union with all others. Hence, universal religion in true sense must satisfy the mind of four kind individuality namely, worker, emotional man, mystic and philosopher.
All these characteristics of an ideal universal religion he found in Vedānta, which he regarded as mother religion of all religions or "religion beyond all religions". For him the term 'Hindu' which is applied is a misnomer. The more appropriate term is Vaidika or Vedantists. But in his lectures and discourses he used both the term 'Vedantism' and 'Hinduism'. All the speeches of Vivekananda at parliament were listened to with great respect and appreciation, they all had one common theme, universality. While all the delegates to the parliament spoke of their own religion, Vivekananda spoke of a religion that was vast as the sky and deep as the ocean. He had tried hard to give to the west his message of Vedānta as the universal principle basic to all religions. Vivekananda had legitimate ground to present Vedānta as universal religion on the world stage. Vivekananda is known as neo vedantist and his message is known as neo-vedanta, because he re-oriented Vedānta from strict philosophical principle to practical life.

Vedānta itself means the end of Vedas. The Upanishad embodying the philosophical work, which were studied after the Samhitas and Brahmanas. Vedic literature is vast, but the Upanisads, Brahmasutras and the Gita, these are regarded as it's principle book. Vedānta for Vivekananda, is both a view or a way of life. It is living philosophy. The main ideas of Vedanta are unity of existences, non-duality of the God, divinity of the soul and harmony of religion. Vedanta carries the essentials of all religions. It has been described as the perennial philosophy, the least common ground of all religions belief. Essentially speaking, it gives us three propositions — (i) The man's real nature is divine. (ii) The aim of life is to realize the divinity of men. (iii) The all religions are in agreement regarding this. For Vivekananda Vedānta is the ideal universal religion.

Vivekananda discussed certain things which are necessary to make a religion. First of all, there is the book. 'No one religion is living today without a book. In our country every attempt to start a religion without a book has failed. In India sects rise with great success. But within a few years they die down, because there is no book behind them. It is in every country. The second requisite seems to be that a religion, to be strong and sure of itself, must believe that it alone is the truth. Otherwise it cannot influence people.
Vedānta does not believe in any of these teachings. First, it does not believe in a book—that is the difficult to start with. It denies the authority of any book over any other book. It denies emphatically that any one book can contain all the truth about God, soul, the ultimate reality. Upanishads say again and again that not by the reading of books can we realization self. For him Vedanta means basically Upanishads, and this is the only religion that does not cling to any person. Not one man or woman has ever become the object of worship among the Vedantists. In his view a man is no more worthy of worship than any bird, and warm. We all are brothers. The difference is only in degree. I am exactly the same as the lowest worm. That means Vedanta speaks for oneness of all existences, all are the expressions of same reality.

Vedānta teaches us a unique idea of God, in the place of traditional idea of God, the monarch sitting on a throne, entirely apart. In brief vedantic idea is that infinite principle of God embodied in every one of us. Therefore Vedanta formulates universal oneness. A human being is the same, as any animal, good, bad anything. Vedanta speaks of the difference is only in degree, not in kind. "It is one body, one mind, one soul through out. Spirit never dies. How can even the body die? One leaf may fall—does the true die? The universe is my body. See how it continues. All minds are mine. With all feet I walk. Through all month I speak. In every body I reside." This is the gist of vedantic oneness.

When any religion claims itself as universal religion, it advocates that it's own conception God, Allah or so on whatever may be. The God of other's religion is unauthentic to them. But Vedānta is very particular and reasonable in this respect. What is worshipped is not the person, but the principles. The absolute basis of this universe, which one is attributed, as creator, preserver, destroyer of this universe is impersonal principle. Even not going to a temple one can be religious in vedantic point of view. "But God is the infinite, impersonal Being ever existent, unchanging, immortal, fearless, and you all are his incarnation; His embodiment. This is the God of Vedānta, and his heaven is every where. In this heaven dwell all the personal Gods there are—you yourselves. Exit praying and laying flowers in the temples."
Vedānta upholds Worship everything as God—every form is temple. Naturally there is no sect, no creed, no caste in Vedānta. He uttered his vedantic vision of spiritual unity of the universe and the basic equality of all creatures. It was from the view point of Vedanta that Vivekananda at the parliament of Religions held in Chicago in September, 1893, "We believe not only universal toleration but we accept all religions as true." He proceeded to observe further, "I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death kneel of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to same goal." In this concluding address at the parliament, Vivekananda observed, "If the parliament of religions has shown anything to the world, it is this, it has proved the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possession of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if any body dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, inspite of resistance: Help and not fight, assimilation and not destruction, Harmony and peace and not dissension." There can hardly be a better exposition of the Vedanta.

Again coming to the another character of Vedanta to present it as universal religion, Vivekananda stated that though Vedanta teaches the worship of impersonal but at the same time it does not take away from mankind the mercy of the Lord. He, the boundless is ever merciful, is always ready to help us to the other shore. Thus if a man wants a personal God to adore, he can find here the noblest idea of a personal God. Various scriptures of Vedānta such as great Vedas, the srutis and various puranas depict the both impersonal spirit and concrete personalities to satisfy the different minds of the seekers.

In his lecture "The mission of the Vedānta", Vivekananda had made an analysis why Vedanta can become the universal religion of men. According to Vivekananda Vedanta alone that can become the universal religion of man, and no other is fitted for the role. Excepting Vedānta, all most all the other
great religions in the world are inevitably connected with the life or lives of one or more of their founders. All their theories, their teachings, their doctrines, and their ethics are built round the life of a personal founder. If there is one threat to the historicity of that life, the whole religion trembles down, breaks absolutely, never to regain its lost status. Further he added that every one of the great religions in the world excepting vedanta is built upon such historical characters. There is no man or women who can claim to have created the Vedas. They are embodiment of eternal principles, sages discovered them. This infinite is impersonal principle which is expressed by different names and forms. Among the discoverers of the eternal truths, one of the greatest sage, which history cannot reach arose and declared, "Ekam Sat, biprah bahudha vadanti," He who exists is one; the sages call Him variously. By such assertion Vedanta allow this infinite variation in religious thought. Not try to bring everybody to the same opinion, because the goal is the same. The goal is 'the ekam sat, one ultimate reality. "As so many rivers, having their in different mountains, roll down, crooked or straight, and at last come into the ocean-so, all these various creeds and religions, taking their start from different stand points and running through crooked or straight course, at last came into Thee." According to Vivekananda thus Vedanta admits the authenticity of every religion and totality of all religion. To the vedantist, the whole world of religion is only traveling to the same goal. Every religion is only evolving a God out of the material man, and the same god is the inspirer of all of them. If they contradict one another in some respects, the contradictions come from the same truth adopting itself to the varying circumstances of different natures. It is the same light coming through glasses of different colours. The consequence of this universalism of vedantic outlook is that "throughout the whole system of sanskrit philosophy, there is no such expression as that the Hindu alone will be saved and not others." Thus it will be seen that Vedatism is the most universal of all religion. Thus in India there never was any religions persecution by the Hindus, but only that wonderful reverence, which they have for all religions of the world. India shuttered a portion of the Hebrew, when they were driven out of their country, and the Malabar jews remain as a result. India received the remnant of the Persians, when they were almost annihilated. There were Christians who claimed to
have come with St. Thomas, the disciple of Jesus Christ and allowed to settle in India to hold their own opinion. This spirit of acceptance and toleration is still prevailing in India. Vivekananda opined that, this is one of the great lesson that the Vedanta has to teach the world, knowing consciously or unconsciously. We are struggling to reach the same goal.

Looking to the present world situation, we find the manifestation of material energy and materialism have crunched the both global peace and the individual peace of mind. In his time Vivekananda saw for himself how the west had come under the grip of rank materialism. He expressed the fear that western civilization world collapse unless it was tempered by the sobering spiritual message of Upanisads. It was in this sense that he spoke above the conquest of the west by Vedantic spirituality. But unfortunately the situation has since deteriorated still further. It is really critical the march of materialism in the world scenario. The present condition in the west has been graphically described in a letter to president Clinton by Mr. Newt Gengrich, speaker of the House of Representatives of America, thus, "It is impossible to maintain a civilization with twelve years old having babies, fifteen years old killing each other, seventeen years old, dying of AIDS, and eighteen years olds acquiring diplomas they cannot read." The 'sickness of an acquisitive society' has invaded the richest country in the world and virtually laid it prostate. The same virus is now rapidly spreading all over the world, including India. Vivekananda was a farseeing man with astonishing introspection, long before he had declared that, the saving message of the world requires is to be found in religion of the Upanisad. The great consequence for the future of humanity is massage of Vedanta, delivered through his worthy speech of Vivekananda. Vivekananda delivered the message of universal Brotherhood in the name of the "Mother of all Religions" and on behalf of the oldest order of Monks in the world, The spirit of universal brotherhood came spontaneously to him as he stood up to deliver the lecture as it comes spontaneously to anyone who is the heir to the great legacy of Vedanta. It is the logical corollary and natural outcome of the vedic vision, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. According to the vedic Risis the entire world is like a bird's nest housing all humanity within it's cosy
bosom. The entire effort of the successors of those vedic Rishis were to translate this vision into practical reality of life.

But the Indian way of Universal brotherhood is difficult to traverse. The journey has to be undertaken step by step. As the Upanisads says, the path is not only difficult but also sharp like the razor's edge Universal brotherhood, as depicted by Vedanta, is the pinnacle of achievement. But the pinnacle is not within every one's immediate reach, though that should be the ultimate aim of everyone. Before attaining Advaitic realization, man has to transverse the realms of Dwaita and Visistadvaita. Similarly, universal brotherhood also to be achieved gradually, step by step, through nationalism and internationalism. Vivekananda has shown the way in this regard. He was a nationalist, internationalist and Universalist at the same time.

According to Vivekananda another very astonishing character of Vedanta to present it as universal religion is, Vedanta has a practical aspect to satisfy the mental food for each kind of individual. He opined, that plane alone is practical, which does not destroy the individuality of any man in religion and at the same time shows him a point of union with all others. From our earlier discussion we observed that Vivekananda for practical purpose characterized human mind into four classes. First, there is the active man, the worker, he wants to work and there is tremendous energy in his muscles and his nerves. His aim is to work. Than the emotional man, who loves the sublime and the beautiful to an excessive degree. He is one, who loves to think of the beautiful, to enjoy the aesthetic side of the nature, and adore love and the God of love. Such person loves with his whole heart the great souls of all times, the prophets of all religions and incarnation of God in the earth. Reason does not matter for such kind of persons. Such persons donot care whether reason can or cannot prove that Christ or Buddha existed. Then there is the mystic whose mind wants to analyze it's own self, to understand the working of the human mind. They are eager to discover the various forces which are working inside the mind and how to obtain control over them. Then the philosophers who want to weigh everything by intellect and reason. For them test of truth by reason alone. For Vivekananda, to be a ideal universal religion, a religion should be harmoniously balanced in these four aspects,
then it will able to satisfy the largest proportion of mankind by supplying their various kind of food of the mind. Generally religions satisfy the people of emotional mind. So Vivekananda, wanted to propagate a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds. It must be equally philosophic, mystic, emotional and conducive to action. He opined that combination of these four aspects will be the ideal of the nearest approach to a universal religion. Ideal universal religion means to him harmoniously balanced in these four directions. He stated, "And this religion is attained by what we, in India, call yoga-union. To worker, it is union between men and the whole humanity, to the mystic, between his owner and higher self, to the lover, union between himself and God of Love; and to the philosopher, it is the union of all existence. This is what is meant by yoga." There are four kinds of yoga. The one who seeks after this any kind of union is called a yogi. The worker is called the Karmayogi, who seeks union through love is called bhakti yogi, he who seeks through mysticism is called Raja-yogi, who seeks through reason and philosophy is Jnana-yogi. The term yogi or yoga comprises them all. Vedânta, is rich enough with four kind of yoga to satisfy the largest position of humanity. Vivekananda refused to make a clear water tight compartment between karma, Jnana and bhakti. He never stated that karma is stepping stone to Bhakti, and bhakti means to jnana. He believed that an integrated cultivation of all these path is the ideal of religion and any one of these paths is followed sincerely and entirely will lead to the ultimate goal of human life, namely ‘Mukti’. In course of discussion Vivekananda further made it clear that, it must be remembered that, it is not that the assumed man becomes the real man or Absolute Because, there is no becoming with the Absolute. It is ever free and ever perfect; but the ignorance that has covered its nature for a time is to be removed. Therefore the whole scope of system of yoga, is to clear up ignorance and allow to the Atman to restore its own nature. Vivekananda believed that each religion represents one of the yogas but Vedanta comprises the four paths. The aim of all yogis, is the same, to wipe out ignorance, to rediscover real divine nature of Atman. Only different is in their way or method, as he takes the path he suits.
Jñānayoga for the strong, for those who are neither mystical nor devotional, but rational. Jnana yogi forces his way to realization of God by the power of pure reason. Jnana yogi is ready to refuse all beliefs and rituals, determined to find the freedom. Jñāna yogis are the philosopher, the thinker, he who wants to go beyond the visible ocean of existence. Such kind of person wants to go beyond, all that into the very heart of being, by seeing Reality as it is; by realizing it, by being it, by becoming one with the universal. Generally devotee describes God, as the Father or the Mother, the creator of the universe, Guide and protector so on. For a jnana yogi; these are inadequate expression. To him God is the life of life, the soul of his soul. God is his own self. Nothing else remains which in other then God. It tells man that he is essentially divine. It shows mankind the real unity of being, and that each one of us is the Lord god Himself, manifested on the earth.

Bhakti yogi works his way to complete oneness with the Supreme through love and devotion, he wants to love God. Bhakti or worship is the pleasant and most natural way of man. The natural state of this universe is attraction and is surely followed by an ultimate discussion. Even so, love is the natural impetus of union in the human heart. Bhakti yoga teaches us to love without any anterior motives. A true Bhakti yogi loves every creature as he sees God everywhere.

The word Karma is derived from the Sanskrit ‘Kri’, ‘to do’. All action is karma. It attains God through works. The grasp of misery, pain, whenever it comes, is the result of attachment to the work. Karma yoga explains the secret and teaches where and how to work, how to employ to the greatest advantage the largest part of our energies in the work that is before us. It teaches us how to work for work’s sake. The pain and misery come from attached (Sakama Karma) work. The watch word of Karma-yaga is ‘not I, but Thou’, all work should be done in the name of Lord without any motive to gain fruits.

Rāja-yoga, the psychological yoga is an analysis of the mind, a gathering of the facts of the super sensible world and building up the spiritual world. Rājayoga is the yoga of concentration and concentration of the mind is the source of all knowledge. Human beings are conscious and this
consciousness is the one link with the infinite chain of consciousness. Through practice layer after layer of the mind open before us and each reveals new facts to us. It reunites empirical self with infinite consciousness.

Jawaharlal Nehru observed thus, "Vivekananda, one of the greatest of the modern exponent of yoga and the Vedanta, has laid repeated stress on the experimental character of yoga and on basing at on reason. 'No one of these yogas give up reason, no one asks you to be hoodwinked or to deliver your reason into the hands of priests of any type whatsoever. Each one of them tells you to cling to your reason, to hold fast to it. Though the spirit of yoga and the Vedânta may be akin to the spirit of science, it is true that they deal with difference media, and hence vital differences creeping. According to yoga, the spirit is not limited to the intelligence, and also thought is action, and only action can make thought of any value."

So in Vedanta's, cosy bosom worship or bhakti, Karma or action, jnana or knowledge and mystical concentration, each has place. Even Vivekanananda himself equally was the great Karma-yogi, bhakti yogi, Raja yogi and Jnanayagi. In this context we can remind that Abheedaranda rightly points out that, Vivekanananda is equally, a great karma-yogi, bhakti yogi, Raja yogi and Jnana-yogi. He was like the living example of Vedanta in all its different branches.

If we analyze the position of Vedanta, we will find that involvement of these four kinds of personalities in four branches of Vedanta. Rishies or the sags were the jnana yogi, who had dedicated their life to discover the eternal principles, which are stored in Vedas, the store house of human wisdom and knowledge. In Vedanta we find also the Bhakti cult, love and adoration to God is their key notes. Mahapurusa Sankardeva, Madhavdeva, Sri Chaityna, such great souls preached the bhakti marga of Vedânta. Infact they were true Bhakti yogi. International society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKON), has preached the bhakti marga of Vedânta all over the world and produced remarkable bhakti yogi, for whom 'niskama-bhakti' to God, is their religion. If we look to the karma-yoga, in our day to day life we meet the persons who are firm karma yogi, dedicated their life in selfless action in the name of Lord. They believe they have right only on action, not on result. Everything has
done in the name of Lord. In the Bhagawat Gita, a pillar of vedantic literature, we can go through a detail discussion on karma yoga or karma yogi. Like Vedanta, Gita's message is also universal and a guide book of karma yogi, belonging to any cast, creed, religion and nation. Rajayogi, are the persons who have firm control over own-self and complete self-possession. When self-possession is achieved, the aspirant does not work for gaining any and but out of our anchorage in God-consciousness. The Supreme is within us. It is the consciousness underlying the ordinary individualized consciousness of every day life but in commensurable with it. Here we can remind of Ramakrishna. He was a great vedantic mystic and enjoyed his vision as of inestimable worth and not liking to enjoy it alone, he kept on preaching it to all. He was a great Raja-yogi.

Champions of Christianity claim that it is the only Universal religion. According to Vivekananda Vedanta alone has only the valid reason to claim the distribution as true universal religion. Because for the validity of Christianity and similar religions are essentially based on claim to the historicity of their founders. This is a very flimsy foundation. If that historicity is doubted the whole edifice falls down. On the other hand Vedanta based on principles. The Risis are only the discoverers of those eternal principles. All other religions are based on what they claim to be historical personalities. They think that their strength lies in that. But if the historicity of their founders is questioned the whole fabric tumbles to the ground. Vivekananda stated, "Our allegiance is to principles always and not to persons. Persons are the embodiments, the illustrations of the principles. If the principles are there, the persons will come by the thousand and millions....These principles of our religion are always the same, and it should be the life work of every one to keep them free from accumulating the dirt and dust of ages." Here Vivekananda upheld a very basic matter, that 'truth' is eternal, unchangeable and vedic seers are the discovers of such 'truth' or eternal 'principles' and communicated them to universal humanity, not to particular race, group or class of people. These principles not such that, they are valid to a particular time, place and to a particular portion of human. To make our view more clear, we can take the example that 'the earth moves round the sun' is a
universal principle and valid to all humanity. No matter who discovered it and it expands the sphere of human knowledge. According Vivekananda, the Rishis are the torch-bearers of such light of eternal principles to spiritualize whole humanity, to rediscover our own divine nature. Vivekananda in course of his discussion stated that, none of these religions can be called universal. Moreover Vivekananda meant the back ground of the birth of a new religion depends on need and situation of that time. For example we can remind Islam. Before Mohammad Arab was a land of polytheism and many kinds of ritualism and idolatry were present there. So against this, to reunite the Arabians Mohammed preached a religion.

The ideas of a personality may be necessary for those days but not necessary for ever. In the aged of science and reasoning we cannot accept anything without actual reason. To accept something illogical, unscientific or unphilosophical is a danger on the path of earning knowledge. The followers of different religions are diversified in their opinion, and are quarrelling and fighting each other. Vivekananda found it as a fact that any religion which is based on or limited by the personality of it’s founder, can not be called universal because the personality of Christ, or Buddha might appeal to a certain class of people. But there are other classes of people for whom the personality of Mohammad will be regard as the only personality which can be worshipped. But in respect of Vedanta, principle overcomes the personality. In Vedanta, the vedic sages were the seers of ‘truth’ (Satya drasta), they communicated ‘Satya’ or spiritual principle to humanity. Who preached, is not important but what they preached, the eternal principle are countable to universal humanity. According to Vivekananda these truths are universal and not the monopoly of any race or teacher and not varied with time, place and circumstances.

Sometime the questions arise and it is pointed out that in Vedas there are various apparently contradictory ideas, some dualistic and other monistic. Vivekananda deals the matter carefully. He replied that in the past our commentators have tried to solve this contradiction by interpreting all the texts either in dualistic or monistic way, mostly by adopting the device of text torturing. But today this method is out of date. The Vedas contain both
dualistic and monistic conceptions, and both of them are necessary for the evolution of mind. So long as we have a body, have the five senses and see the external world, we must have a personal God. But there may be times in the lives of sages when the human mind transcends, its own limitations. When the man goes beyond nature to a realm of which the Sruti declares "whence words fall back without the mind reaching it....Then and then alone flashes into the human soul the conception of monism-I and the whole universe are only Brahman, are one"(47)

Thus Vivekananda, showed that there stages of dualistic and monistic conceptions are therefore many stages in the development of the human spirit. We must remember that true religion does not consist in external practices, putting particular marks on body or dressing in a particular way. Vedanta therefore lays down distinctly and clearly that everyone who wants salvation must pass through the sages of Rishihood must become a 'Mantra-drashta', must see God. In brief, all power is there within us and we have to express the divinity within us. At end we see divinity in all creatures. According to Vivekananda no notion can be more universal than Vedanta in this regard, seeing God everywhere. As men become aware of his own divinity he becomes aware at the same time the divinity of his fellow being. Along with the development of his faith on himself his regards for others is developed His potentialities grow. As his potentialities grow his self faith is intensified. His capacity for serving his fellow creatures necessarily increases. Ultimately leads to the realization of – Brahman.

According to Vivekananda universal religion must embrace all the sectarian religions, whether monotheistic or dualistic, whether qualified non dualistic. It should embrace all different religious ideas according to their relative value. The highest aim of all religions is the same goal, which is the realization of the truth, or the attainment of God consciousness, or perfection, although they start from different view points. Vivekananda held that, the difference between a sectarian religion and universal religion is that, sectarian religion preaches that who do not believe in their doctrine and dogmas will suffer. In Vivekananda's view, as two faces are not alike so, two minds are not alike. If we try to make all faces look alike, we will have to smash every face. There
will no face left on the earth. Such is the role of sectarian religion. In the words of Abhedananda, "Therefore if you try to enforce one set of ideal upon all, you will make the mistake, as I would make when standing at the street corner, I offer my coat to all passers-by, and ask them to try it on their bodies and curse those whom it would not fit. All sectarian religions make similar mistake when they say that those who do not believe in their doctrine and dogmas will not receive, but will suffer." Vivekananda stated repeatedly in is various discussion that, Vedânta embraces, all religions, all prophets and all opinions. For Vivekananda Vedânta as universal religion has ‘love’ on it's foundation and that love is love for humanity.

The message of Vivekananda, to present age is to spread good will and love to all, through Vedanta. All through his life he taught us to abandon greed, selfishness which are our the greatest enemy. Only material prosperity and material pleasure can demote us from greatest being of the world to lowest one. His thought and deeds always worked to show harmony among the existing religions and to create the sense that, Mohammedan, Hindu, Christian all are brothers. We all are worshipping the same God, but the methods or forms are different. The one all pervading, omnipotent and formless spirit manifest itself in various forms under different names to fulfill the desires of worshippers.

Another most important aspect of universal religion as highlights by Vivekananda that it must have a perfect harmony with the ultimate conclusion of modern science. If we examine the doctrine and dogmas of different sectarian religion, he opined we find no harmony. By following him we can find out the pulse of universal religion in Vedas and Upanisads. He observed that the ideals and ultimate conclusion of modern science were anticipated by the seers of truth, who described their realization in most beautiful language, the Shanskrit language. For Vivekananda ‘Nasadia Sukta’ of veda is a very systematic theory of evolution. No where in hymn it is stated that God emerged and created the universe just like a magician. Scientificness of this theory consists in the fact long before, at down of human civilization the vedic sages, presented, a gradual process of development, rather than a creation in a particular moment by particular supernatural agency. The vedic thinkers
were not unmindful of the philosophical problems of the origin and nature of
the world. Amidst the all changing things, they searched for the first ground of
them. It is now well known scientific fact that the universe is the result of
gradual process of development or evolution. Science also believes that from
a primordial point this universe has come into existence. According to the
hymn of evaluation also stated as hymn of creation, there was neither air, nor
day, nor night. It is that 'Absolute' darkness, darkness was rolling over
darkness and there was the eternal Being, who breathed, but was breathless.
From Him emanated the energy and all the forces of the nature. From one
substance emanated the Prana or life force, the mind or sense power i.e. the
powers of hearing, seeing, smelling, touching and that which is 'either' or
which is gaseous, liquid and solid. Vivekananda stated that there is no other
scripture of the world which gives such a perfect evolution of the world.

Another principle of universal religion recognized by Vivekananda is
ideal of unity in variety and such ideal is echoed in Vedas, he observed.
Vedas tell us that as one being of world is manifested itself into various forms,
so the universal Being has entered into the universe and has manifested in
the forms of minerals, vegetables, animals, birds and human being. There are
various beautiful simile found in Vedas. As one air entering into a musical
instrument passes through different holes, and produces different notes of
music. So one 'Eternal Being' entering into the universe has appeared in so
many different forms. As we see in so many electric lamps, the electricity is
one, but the manifestation is in uniform, similarly, the one form life-force which
is all-pervading is manifesting through all. Where there is life force is to be
found everywhere. In a human being, it has reached its climax. Even in a
wooden table it consists as electrons and vanishes into the ocean of eternal
energy. So this eternal energy is the abode of God who is called by different
names, as Allah, Siva, Vishnu or Buddha, or by any other name. This is
Vivekananda's rational approach to universal religion, and represents
Hinduism as the 'mother of religions' and within Hinduism that Vedanta is the
core. It was his special gift to Vedantic oneness as bearing a pointer to our
obligation to our fellows. He believed all religions are equal, but Vedanta for
some special grounds can claim as 'universal religion', which are discussed in
Vivekananda had a dream of spirituality for entire mankind and his notion of universal religion was reflection of such dream. So, Vedanta with its four branches of yogas has more privilege to represent as universal religion.

**V.5 : Practical Vedânta:**

Vivekananda, the neo-vedantist went to Western World with his message of Vedânta, which can be regarded as Vedanta in practice or practical Vedanta. Here Vivekananda accepted 'Vedanta' in a broad sense, including Vîeda, Upanisad, and Gîta. Vivekananda's mission was to show the entire world that Vedanta, is not only a intellectual exercise in search of 'Reality' alone. Vedanta bears also a practical aspect. It can be guiding principle of our life and it can re-order, re-generate our life and society. Vivekananda stated, "The upanisad in the past was only for the sannyasin. Sankara made it available also to the house-holder. But it is in the Gita, the best commentary on the Veda, that it is made available for everyone in every occupation of life." Further we can add that Vivekananda showed this practical aspect of Vedanta to whole World. In 1896, he delivered several lectures on practical Vedanta in London. Vivekananda realized that, theory is good but, without practical application, it has no value. Such kind of theory just becomes intellectual gymnastics.

In the first lecture on practical Vedânta, Vivekananda delivered the Vedantic message of unfolding the potential divinity of man, developing an unshakable faith on oneself, generating absolute fearlessness of any kind, and attaining complete freedom of the spirit, which is caged in mind body complex. All these basic message of Vedanta have great significance in our life. Vivekananda regarded Vedanta as practical philosophy on the ground that it is not the outcome of meditation in the forest only, but that, the very best part of it were thought out by persons which were busy in the everyday
affairs of life - like ruling monarch. In his words, “proceeding from forest caves to busy streets and cities; and one peculiar feature we find is that many of these thoughts have been the outcome, not of retirement into forest, but have emanated from persons whom we expect to lead the busiest lives—from ruling monarchs(50)

Obviously the question arises, ‘What is practical?’ In Vivekananda’s view, that is the most impractical ideal or theory which asks us to give up our selfishness to follow the ideal. The practical ideal, reconciles our self interest with the ideal, that we have to follow. Though Vedanta preaches high ideal, but this is intensely practical. We can actualize it in our life. It says that actual should conform to the ideal. The present life should be made to coincide with the life eternal, not vice versa.

Vedanta boldly asserts the divinity of every man. In brief, this ideal is ‘you are divine’. ‘Thou art that’, this is the essence of Vedanta. To understand it more clearly we can say that vedantic divinity of men implies also the vedentic principle of immortality of the soul. Eternal life is different from survival or death which is given to every embodied being. It is the transcendence of life and death. Birth and death, all these are entire nonsense when spoken of in connection with the soul. This vedentic principle has a great practical aspect. When we know ourself as eternal self, then going to die, afraid of dieing becomes mere superstition. It creates an immense faith on oneself. When we feel ourselves as fountain of divinity then, ‘we are able to do this’ or ‘not able to do this’, such ideas vanish from our mind. Vedanta teaches us to have faith in ourselves, as we all are eternal spirit, not simply a time space caged mind-body. Then we never deflected from path of duty and able to traverse every weakness. We can do everything we want to do. He stated, “As certain religions of the world say that man who does not believe in a personal God outside of himself is an atheist, so the Vedanta says, a man who does not believe in himself is an atheist”(51) Not believing in the glory of our own soul is what the Vedanta calls atheism. This ideal of Vedanta can be realized by everyone irrespective of race, sex or religion and in all possible condition of life.
According to Vivekananda the teaching of Vedanta philosophy is that all the powers in the universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and cry that is dark. Darkness never existed, weakness never fixed. Thus Vedanta not only insists that the ideal is practical, but that it has been so all the time, and this ideal, this Reality, is our own self. If we think ourself as 'little mortal being', we become weaker hypnotizing ourselves. We have to think ourself as eternal, ever-pure, ever blessing immortal, then all our action, thought and dream can touch the height of sky. So Vedanta asks us to start with positive and high to win the world.

Vedānta recognizes no sin, it only recognizes error. And the greatest error for one is to think that we are weak. That he is a sinner and he has no power to do this or that. Therefore Vedanta states whoever thinks he is weak is wrong and is throwing a bad thought into the world. In Vedanta there is no attempt at reconciling the present life the hypnotized life, this false life which we have assumed with the ideal, but this false life must go, and the real life which is always existing must manifest itself, must shine out. No men becomes purer and purer, it is a matter of great manifestation. The veil drops away and native purity of our self begin to manifest.

We are ocean of infinite power, knowledge, of freedom and love. We are divine. If we accept the teaching that man is the immortal spirit which nothing can destroy, we can rise above all. To realize this great truth we need not go to forest cave for meditation. The positive teaching of Vedanta is on the inherent power and purity of the spirit. Vedānta has shown that there is but one soul throughout the universe. This infinite oneness of the soul is the eternal sanction for all morality. Through that only the brotherhood of all living beings can be established. Besides, understanding that we are part and parcel of that one divine spirit is necessary for generating faith in oneself. The central idea of Vedānta is oneness. We are all going to the same goal. Therefore we must not look down with the contempt on others. The difference between weakness and strength is one of degree, the difference between heaven and hell is one of degree, because oneness in the secret of everything. As such, we have no right to look down with contempt upon those who are not developed exactly in the same degree as we are. We should help
them to look forward, to evoke their latent divinity. But strength does not come by thinking of weakness all the time. We have to keep in mind the teaching of Vedanta, that remedy for weakness is not brooding over one’s weakness. Vivekananda hold that religion, to help mankind, must be ready and able to help men in every condition of his life. If religion to be potent force of man’s life, it should provide strength and inspiration in all situations of his life. The vedantic teaching of faith in oneself is the best means for generating this strength and inspiration. As Vivekananda said, the vedantic ideal, ‘Faith in ourselves’ is of the greatest help to all man. If this ideal had been more extensively taught and practiced a very large portion of the evils and misery which we have, would have vanished. All the difference between man and man arises from the degree of faith have in themselves. But it is not the selfish faith which assumes, “Only myself as divine”, because vedantic oneness never permit us to do so. It means faith in all, because you are all. Love ourself means love for all, love for animals, love for everything. It is the great faith which makes the world better.

One of the most practical implications of Vedanta is that, Vedanta preaches a practical God. For Vedanta God is not some one who dwells up above and by offering sacrifice and gifts we can satisfy him to fulfill our needs. Rather Vedanta presents a practical living God. According to Vedanta God dwells in every creature. Same ‘Reality’, which is regarded as ‘God’ from religious point of view, dwells in all of us. Vivekananda in his lectures on practical Vedanta raised a very important aspect of vedantic morality. Vedanta teaches us that we all are, prophet or all must be prophets. The great man of the past only spoke a few words. They feel good and so do good accordingly. This is another practical implication of vedantic morality. There is no inborn great soul with great potentiality. We all are equally divine and potential. It also bears a practical equality. So Vedanta gives immense practical ground to be a prophet, at least to be a good man for the good of the world.

Our discussion on practical Vedanta will be incomplete if we donot offer a discussion on karmayoga of vedanta, which is elaborately found in 3rd chapter of ‘The Bhagavad Gita’. Karmayoga teaches us ‘Niskarna Karma Yoga’ or “desire less action”, (Kama means desire, ‘niskarma’ means without
desire). It is stated in Gita, “But he who controls the senses by the mind, O Arjuna, and without attachment engages the organs of action in the path of work, he is superior.”(62) All work is to be done in a spirit of sacrifice, for the sake of the Divine without desiring the result. Vivekananda very beautifully explains the practical aspect of ‘niskama’ Karma yoga. How ‘less passion’ can help us. He explains that the less passion there is, the better we work. The calmer we are, the better for us. When we let loose our feelings, we waste so much energy, shatter our nerves and accomplish very little work. The calm, forgiving, equable, well balanced mind can do the greatest amount of work. This ‘niskārma karmayoga’ can help man in any profession to do duty without hoping anything in return.

The second lecture on practical Vedānta was delivered in London, 12th November, 1986. In this lecture stated that in Upanishads we get different stories of symbolic importance. The great idea is that that all voices of knowledge are inside ourselves. Vedānta teaches us that human soul is the great store house of knowledge and our soul is the best teacher of us.

The second idea we get from the story that of making the knowledge of practical Brahman. Vedanta teaches us a very practical religion, that God resides in each matter, each creature as all are parts of Brahman. Another practical import we get from the stories that, the Vedanta does not deny the world, the person and the individual but explain them by showing their real nature. Vedānta gives everything a higher meaning. Before, everything of the world for us mere matter and some disunited parts of the earth. When we know Brahman as everything, than fire, earth, matter, life everything transformed into Brahman, a spiritual oneness is established. So according Vivekananda, Vedānta gives us a practical religion, The theme of Vedanta is to see the Lord in everything. To see things in their real nature, not as they appear to be.

Vivekananda explains the practical nature of the vedantic idea of salvation. He says that every religion deals with problem of destiny of man. Some religion holds that they who subscribe to their dogma will go to haven
while rests are condemned to hell. But the Vedanta philosophy, according to Vivekananda, makes a distinction between going to heaven and attaining salvation. According to it, Heavens are transitory. They can not be permanent because everything that has name and form must die. They are only temporary regions for enjoyment and suffering according to one’s merits and demerits. After which one comes back to earth consciousness to struggle therefore further evolution. But the persons who have realized the impersonal absolute, the all pervading existence-knowledge-Bliss and to attain which one need not go away anywhere or wait for the falling of the body. They recognize their one ness with Brahman. Such person does not care whether he goes heaven or hell. That person becomes free while living here or get salvation.

The idea of impersonal God of Vedanta is thrown away because it is against traditional religious institution and religious values. The Mohammedan says that there is no God but Allah. Vedanta says that there is nothing that is not God. The living God is within everyone. The only god to worship is the human soul within the human body.

Vivekananda raised a very practical exposition that the impersonal conception of God can destroy the narrow and limited idea of personal God, which has been responsible for much of the fanaticism. The personal God is fashioned in such a way that it enforces ethics by fear of punishment. But true morality is motivated by love and fellow feeling. Universal love can flourish, only when we see the whole universe as one Being and that each oneself is involved in the selves of all.

According to Vivekananda, freedom and detachment can come only through the impersonal ideal only. When we realize that our essence is one with the infinite being, than we are free from the limitation of karma and the bondage of nature. We then gain freedom from the oppressive hold of Nature. We can view all life in detachment as an actor views the part he is playing.

Vivekananda opined that Upanishads adopted a very practical method of teaching. In many stories of Upanisads people worshipped objects like Fire, Sun, Bird, Moon etc of symbolic importance. People get wisdom through them. For Vivekananda, this is the most practical aspect of Upanisadic
method of teaching. The truth is shown through the things of day-to-day life and students are familiar with them. From our observation question arise in our mind that, 'Do this stories bear a proto-materialistic outlook of ancient vedic people'. In various hymns of Rg. Veda we find that early vedic stage was a proto-materialistic outlook. People were used to worship fire, cow, feed etc. Debiprasad Chattopadhaya observes, "The vedic poets did not know any desire that was not positively material...Thus, it would be wrong to attribute to them any other worldly or spiritualistic outlook."(53)

Vivekananda delivered his 3rd lecture on practical Vedânta in London, 17th Nov, 1896. True religion consists on scientific foundation, not on blind faith and dogmas. In this lecture, Vivekananda put importance on the requirement of scientific religion. He says that the philosophy of Upanisads is scientific and rational for a special reason that its teachings are formulated in agreement with two important laws of scientific thought.

1. Knowledge consists in referring the particular to general

2. Explanations of the facts of nature are to be got from within Nature itself, not from extraneous agencies.

According to Vivekananda, vedic thought has applied these two principle, so vedic thought can be regarded as scientific. If we observe the worship or religion of early vedic period, we find that it starts with a large number of Devas as object of worship and adoration. They arrived at the conclusion of one God, of whom all others are expression only. So also in the study of nature from several elements and forms of energy, they arrive at one stuff Akasa as the source of all elements, and prana as the matrix of all energies. Finally, Akasa and Prana are unified into the all embracing prakrti (Nature), which has manifested as two Akasa and Prana.

Vivekananda mentioned that the weakness of dualistic religion was first exposed in India by the Buddhists. They tried to show that the ideas of a God and soul are only gratuitous assumption, and are unnecessary to understand. The metaphysical position is also the same, as there is the controversy between substance and the attribute.
In the anthological theory of dualistic school, it is held that there is something called 'substance' to which all qualities are related. In the same way, many philosophers say that behind the changing phenomena, there must be a changeless substance, a God, on background. Behind the change of mind and body, it is assumed that there is changeless substance, the soul.

Against this dualistic view Buddhist argue that we have experience only of change. The assumption of a changeless background district from them is a needless assumption without validity. So, they argue that, there is only the 'change'. There is no unchanging substratum. There is no need for a permanent God; behind it. It is also unnecessary for Buddhist to assume a permanent self behind mind body complex.

Vivekananda holds that the satisfactory solution to this problem is what the Vedānta gives. The Vedanta admits that there are no two entities as the changing and the changeless, the phenomena and the noumena only one exists. When the one is seen, the other disappears. He explains the position with the help of rope snake illusion. When the snake is experienced in the rope, there are no two objects. There is only one object, rope. But when the snake is perceived, the rope disappears and when rope becomes visible, the snake disappears. The same logic is applicable to the problem of change and changeless. It is one and the same entity which appears as subject of change, but it is change less from the point of view of totality.

Buddhists criticism of God and the soul can be assumed by non-dualistic view of Vedanta. Vedānta accepts all comprehending Absolute which is both change and changeless. It is feared that the Advaitic Absolute seeks to dethrone God and establish a kind of atheism. But according to Vivekananda, this is a misconception. The impersonal Absolute, on the other hand, can be the best justification of personal God, in so far as it is alone is capable of giving an explanation of duality through a higher synthesis and without invoking the aid of any extraneous agency. A personal God can not be proved, but, if the impersonal Absolute is admitted, the personal can be explained as the highest reading of that Absolute by the human mind. In fact, all our knowledge consists only of various reading of the Absolute by human
mind, so long as we are embodied beings, understanding of thing is possible only through our mind and senses. We have there fore to keep ourself as the observer of the Absolute.

Hence, for Vivekananda, vedantic thought is in accordance with the laws of scientific thought. As result it explains nature, God, Absolute all these properly. Even it reconciles two views, dualistic view and Buddhist view.

The fourth lecture on practical Vedana was delivered in London, 18th November 1896. In this lecture Vivekananda explained the vedantic idea of the relation of particular to the universal. With the help of this he showed vedantic particularity regarding the soul-body theory. In this discussion of ancient vedantist and Buddhist, it was a very important question whether there is a particular soul in each embodied being. It is also found in European philosophy as substance and quality. Vedanta believes, the individual soul as complete in itself, Buddhists deny the existence of the soul. The central argument in favour of a soul in each body lies on the fact of 'self identity'. It is observed that inspite of the all changes of mind and body, we found ourselves as same 'I', all through our life. It is stated that memories of 'different' states and period, as also of action like sitting, standing, etc attributed to an 'I' which is continuous. It is another point in favour of soul theory. Thus, there is an unchanging soul in man a centre around which all the changing phenomena of the body mind occur.

Buddhists rejected this dichotomy of a permanent soul opposed to a changing body and mind. They brought forward the argument that all that we know, and all that we possible can know, are simply changes. They never accepted two separate entity as qualities and substance. Vedanta upholds that, there is only one entity which experienced at a time, either is change only or as changeless only. Either as attribute-only or as substance only. According to Vivekananda, Advaita theory of the soul reconciles both these position. The position of the Advaita is that it is true that we cannot think of the substance as separate from the qualities. we cannot think of change and not change at the sometime; it would be impossible. But the very thing which is the substance is the quality; substance and quality are not two things. It is the
unchangeable that is appearing as the changeable. The unchangeable substance of the universe is not something different from the phenomena. The mistake consists in thinking of them as two entities or as two parts of an entity. When we experience ourselves as body mind, like soul is no where in our experience then. But when we experience ourselves as the soul, the body vanishes. 

Vivekananda holds that, according to Vedānta, permanence can be asserted only about the Absolute, the whole. For there is nothing beside the whole and the change is possible only where there are two, one stationery and the other moving. Vivekananda stated that, everyone is included in the whole and when this whole consciousness arises, the question of soul and body, of changeless and change of substance and attribute never remain. Then unitary consciousness arises. Even in this point, the reason demands further explanation as man is aware of their individuality and to preserve it. An evolving individuality can get a meaning only with reference to an infinite individual. To dualistic view point, which takes each individual as a separate unit evolving towards perfection, is acceptable for Vedanta in order to accommodate people who cannot rise to the level of non-duality.

All through his lectures on practical Vedanta Vivekananda, adheres to the divinity of human being and this divinity should be worshiped. Rejecting all tough metaphysics, logic, we should simply spread the message of divines of all our-fellow beings to the world. At the end of the lecture he optimistically asserts again the practical possibility of Vedānta, "........let us try to make things simpler and bring about the golden days when every man will be a worshipper, and the 'Reality' in every men will be the object of worship."(54)

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