CHAPTER-II

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2.1 AGE BACKGROUND OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA:

It is said that man is product of his age or creature of his own environment. it is quite essential to know the social phenomenon of the writer in which he lived and worked. In this connection K.R. Srinivasa Iyenger quotes the words of the French Literary Historian, M.Taine “that Literature is the creation of three factors: the race, the mile, the moment.”¹ This all presupposes that for the profound and comprehensive understanding of an author’s literary work among other things, a thorough understanding of an age is required; the age which produced and nurtured the writer. Without the background of the historical context our evaluation and apprehension of literature is bound to be one-sided. Every main is a child of his age. Even in their case also the age factor would not have escaped its impact. The reverse approach also holds true by analyzing writer’s personality, we can assert the various historical influences that have merged with the writer’s personality. In this context, words of Matthew Arnold may be quoted to point out the importance of social environment that is conducive to the satisfactory literary productions of real men of genius. Therefore Mathew Arnold says, “… for the creation of a mater work of literature two powers must concur, the power of the

man and the power of the moment, and the man is not enough without the moment."²

The above quoted words of Matthew Arnold relates to the sociological fact of man's growth and development of his personality that he owes to the social forces. The reverse order of this also holds true viewed in the light of historical personality. The historical personality is rejuvenating force. He is like tidal wave, before the advent of this, there are lesser manifestation of Whirlpools in society. It is through historical personality these Whirlpools are transformed into the tidal wave. Tidal wave has all the force that it lends its own colour to the phenomenon. Thus this also reminds at the same time T.S. Eliot's concept of tradition. In the dynamic concept of Eliot's tradition, past and present blend together, and they form one complete whole. The relationship of the past and present, is reciprocal. As T.S. Eliot puts it, "... and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of 'order of the form of European' of English literature will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past."³

In the analogy mentioned in the quoted words of T.S. Eliot, a fact can be gathered that it is not only the age factor that can influence a writer but also if the writer is great man, he may influence it also. There are eminent men, in the

nineteenth century of Indian social context who have initiated various social
movements, and were also influenced by their age.

It is worth examining the then social context of the 19th century India.
Before the establishment of British rule in India, India had passed through various
vicissitudes of fortune. It has grown under the pressure of certain foreign peoples
who one after another occupied large part of Indian territory. Among all invaders
British had lasting impact on the Indian minds. The British did not make India
their home, they rather thought it source for various raw materials. Indians for the
first time felt that they were being dominated culturally, politically and
economically by the Britishers who were aliens in all respects. And freedom
seemed to be curtailed everywhere in all parts of India; and the consent of British
people was needed to make move in any affairs. A country with large population
and rich inexhaustible resources was ruled by alien power. The material wealth
was mercilessly exploited and the sacred land of tradition and eternal values
succumbed to poverty, pestilence, famine and death on large scale. Britishers
shook the Indian pagoda tree and left the country people ill-fed and ill-doted. The
glorious past of India, the abode of Rama and Krishna, was being shattered.

British rule had paved the way for new ways and modes of living. To
Indians, old values were yielding place to the new, modern spirit was gaining
upper most in the minds of Indians. The spirit of nationalism was slowly losing its
ground; and Indian were becoming strangers in their own land. This ferment can
better be described in the words of S.S. Mital as: "Thus India began to drift
aimlessly, and entered a very gloomy chapter in their long history. In the long
unbroken, stream of her spiritual life, in her age long tradition and culture which had given her peculiar characteristic of her own, a vacuum was thus created, offering a challenge to her very existence.

In the light of the above quoted statement, it becomes clear that the Britishers had already become not only administrative force, but also civilizing and educative force as well. In 1823, Rammohan Roy had pleaded to Lord Amherst for English Education instead of oriental education. In this connection K.R. Srinivasa Iyngar observes “Nay more: Rammohan Roy not only wanted English and more English in India: He also wanted more Englishmen in India.”

The period of nineteenth century in the Indian history is significant period in as much during this century Europe dominated large part of India. In the beginning Britishers invaded India in the name of trade, dealing in spices, both culinary and spiritual. they gradually managed to acquire control over hinterlands, and finally dealing with Indian princess took control over vast territory of India.

The economic condition of Indians was deteriorated utterly. The age-old self-sufficient Indian Villages had undergone radical change; it had destroyed the self-containing unit of India villages which catered different social and economic deeds. Britishers first time succeeded in destroying the age-old pattern of village self-sufficiency. The introduction of Zaminadari system and Ryotwari system had disturbed Indian peasant life; Agricultural Field become victim of commercialization and specialization.


5 Iyanger 47.
As a result parasites middlemen and money lenders rose up and ruthlessly exploited the peasants. S.S. Mittal observed this rural scene as: "Fragmentation of holding’s colossal rural indebtedness, fall in agricultural production famines and pestilence, all become regular feature of the Indian Rural Scene."6

Growth of Industries in India proved fatal to the Indigenous Indian industries. The fate of India became a store of house of raw materials. British products made in-roads into the Indian market at cheaper rates. Rapid transport system like roads and rail roads were set up for quick delivery of British manufactured goods (Indian village industries and artisanship vanished totally) Consequently, Indian village industries and artisanship dwindled into airy nothing. But the effect of this industrial policy rather strengthened Indian unity by laying foundation of national consciousness with the help for the network of railways which linked up various parts of India.

Britishers other than establishing their supremacy over Indians, thought of civilizing Indians for the sake of their convenience. Britishers by establishing their supremacy over Indians, thought of civilizing.

Indians for their convenience the passing of Charter Act of 1813 by the British meant Welfare measure for Indians. As Gouri Viswanathan observes: "This act, renewing the East India Company’s charter for a twenty-year period, produced two major charter in Britain’s relationship with her colony; one was the

5 Mittal 9.
assumption of a new responsibility, toward native education, and the other was a relaxation of controls over missionary activity in India.”  

The charter Act, however, radically altered the prevailing state of Laissez-faire in Indian educational matters. The 13th resolution categorically, stated that England was obliged to promote the “interests and happiness” of the native and that measures ought to be adopted “as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge and of religious and moral improvement” This hurt the feelings of Muslims as well as Hindus. Apart from humiliation meted out to Indians as well as Muslims, missionaries were intent to root out social evils like caste system, idol worship, child marriage and widow burning and other religious customs.

The religious leaders of the time belonging to the Samaj movement and the Ramakrishna Mission acknowledged the fact that object lesson in social service was provided by Christian Missions. Besides, there was intellectual impact by introducing English language into Indian Education. Macaulay was responsible for enhancing educational policy of inculcating science and learnings of the west into Indian minds. He thought of rapid westernizing the thought of Indians. In the 19th century, educated class felt pride in the possession of English Language as precious treasure. S.S. Mital aptly observes: “Besides, English was at that time the language of liberty and it is no wonder that the Indian intelligentsia held fast to it and prided in their mastery of the language. The language of revolt had a place

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of high honour in English literary and the love of liberty was undoubtedly implanted into Indian minds by the study of English literature.

The decision took by the British Government in 1835 was decisive sole in enhancing English education on the Indian Soil. Their intention to convert everything into English except the race. English education created vogue of English fashion in the style of Indians. There were three divisions among the group of Indians with the impact of English education. A group extremely addicted to the English ways of Life: and the second group realized their glorious past of its own culture and religion; the third was moderate group who synthesized the best of British and Indians as well. The new educational policy led the Indians towards the rise of Indian renaissance of Hinduism and the rise of Hindu nationalism.

S.S. Mittal gives graphic picture of the above trend in his words:

The times, in which Vivekananda lived experienced a renaissance of the spirit... the orthodox sections kept their Vedic heritage sealed with themselves and did not learn the English language or allow modern ideas to influence them. In their frantic efforts to preserve their ancient tradition, they petrified it. People in another section, on the other hand were very much fascinated by the Western ways and views of life, and adopted them blindly. These people declared that to be Indian was to be uncivilized. They regarded every thing Eastern as useless. There was third section of people who were wise and had the power of discrimination and were rooted in Indian culture. They did not blindly swallow all

\[\text{Mittal 11.}\]
that west gave them. They were fascinated by the West but not subjected. They were shaken but not shattered.\textsuperscript{9}

Western influence had such a sway over the minds of Indians that their very thinking was coloured with Western outlook – they were all English except the race. This was the seed state for the Indian Renaissance. Henry Derozio one such personality who created the trend of verozioman – the followers of Derozio. Derozio being teacher inspired by English Romantics and influenced by Victorians communicated his zeal and spirit of Western ?culture to Indians. K.R. Srinivas Iyengar comments on the behaviour of Derozio men as:

The Derozio men become rather a law unto themselves, and they went further than Derozio himself would have gone or have liked them to go. They played the iconoclasts in many obvious ways, defined orthodoxy in terms of cheap exhibitionism, and generally behaved like thoroughly irresponsible young men. The West meant merely unaudulterated freedom to them – but for other Western values they cared little. In short, they were nihilists intoxicated with a sense of false importance; they were just rootless beings with dark despair seated at the centre of their lives.\textsuperscript{10}

On the other side, missionaries found the opportunity, the favourable climate of the Derozio men for proselytizing. The missionaries embarked upon converting the Deroziomen; they yielded to the influence and became anglicized. Some Hindu leaders realized the danger to the Hindu Society, they thought of safeguarding it from the missionary influence. As testimony to the various

\textsuperscript{9} Mittal 13.
\textsuperscript{10} Srinivas Iyengar P.40.
invading influences that ruled the lives of Indians in the past, William Walsh
remarks, "if the extraordinary nature of the Indian past, a set of the sharpest
physical antitheses, and the national history of invasion, resistance, absorption and
survival are potent influences on the Character of Indian civilization..."11
Maharashi Debendranath Tagore apposed this proselytizing and went home to
home to persuade Hindu not to yield to the missionaries influence. Western
impact was of such force that even the majority Indians not only being converted
to the Christian faith but also remained anglicized Indians enjoying benefits of
both worlds, the West and the East.

Meanwhile we shall have brief glance at intellectual and moral climate that
existed before the advent of Swami Vivekananda. That climate may be suitably
called the climate of Indian Renaissance. Indian Renaissance was revival of
ancient learning of the Vedas i.e., acquiring spiritual knowledge in all its
slenderer. This revival of learning, in turn, was to better the conditions of human
life. Thus Indian Renaissance can be annotated in both the ways. The revival of
the ancient and the sense of humanism. In the words of Santil L Mukherji:
"Etymologically Renaissance means a rebirth (renascence or Renasata) and more
often than not Renaissance is taken in the sense of revival of learning alone... It
was in fact revival, although partial, of lost individuality – the resurrection of man
as man, which is the real import of Renaissance."12

Ram Mohan Roy founded Brahmo Sabha in 1828; he interpreted Hindu
religion in the new light. He was against all supercilious beliefs and wrong

11 William Walsh, Indian Literature in English. Longman Literature in English Ser. (London:
practices of the Hindu religion. He strongly attacked idolatry. Thus he was able to tackle every social, political and cultural problems of his time. This tradition later, carried forward by Maharishi Debendranath Tagore into the Brahmo Samaj. But the Brahmo Samaj did not win much popularity among Hindus. Its occasional inclination to Christian ideas prevented deep rooted stay in the hearts of millions of Hindus. But the Samaj exercised its needed contribution in the Renaissance movement and the political awakening.

In 1824 Dayananda Saraswati, a great yogi and profound yogi scholar founded ‘Arya Samaj’. It was unlike Brahmo Samaj having its inclination towards Christianity. Dayananda Saraswati was an aggressive exponent of Hindu religion. He apposed any intrusion of foreign climate in the Hindu religion. His plea was for the pristine purity of Vedic Hinduisms. Therefore he denounced all Puranas, Brahmanas and Upanishads. But he was dead against all caste disenchant; and equally struggled hard for the equality of women and wide spread education. This Arya Samaj was able to infuse a new blood and vigour into the whole structure of Hinduism. There was a little fanatical about him; he considered Muslims and Christians enemies of Aryan culture. That is why he did not allow any intrusion of foreign element in the Hindu religion.

A mention may be made of another religious movement that of Theosophy. It was founded by madam Blavatsky, the Russian and Colonel Olcott, the American in New York in 1875. Later, Annie Besant become the President of this Society in 1907; The society was known as ‘Theosophical Society’. There was wide spread propaganda all over the country through lecture and popular literature; it was reformed Universal Hinduism. Vedanta was main concern of
Mrs. Annie Besant. She pointed out to Hindu that their life is rooted in their religion. Hindu religion, according to Mrs. Annie Besant, has given shelter to all other religions and the religion is most ancient one. Thus the praise heaped by the foreigners on Hindu religion roused the spirit of pride among Hindus about the ancient glory of their cultural literature. This was the positive impact on the Indian minds by the Theosophy. But the other impact was negative: It promoted superstitious belief along with religious belief. The glaring defect of the theosophy was its antipathy to all human progress. In other words, theosophy showed itself dangerously anti-social. The one beneficial result that can be attributed to the Theosophy is its breaking barrier between the Western thought and the Indian thought.

From the above survey of the age background of the 19th Century of Indian context, one thing is clear that there were two tendencies prevalent. One of the trends was to seek the revival of the ancient Indian culture having opposed to the Western influences. There was strict observance of traditional practices except opposition of some obsolete customs. The second tendency was that of intellectuals who thought of reformation of Hindu religion according to the needs of the times. Their approach was not only the reviver of the Hindu religion, but also moving towards better state and greater future with the help of modern science and culture. Sri Ramakrishna, and his disciple Vivekananda belonged to this second tendency. The second tendency is for more important in consideration of Swami Vivekananda’s social concern of his mystical philosophy. This age background helps lot to probe into the mental make-up of the magnetic personality of Swami Vivekananda.
The various movements mentioned in the preceding paragraphs were not effective to bridge the gap between the West and the east. It was the Advent of Ramakrishna, who was born on 17 February 1836, was able person to the challenging task of the time. He was able to save Indian culture and could place it on new Pedestal K.R. Srinivas lyengar observes the phenomenal scene of the emergency of Ramakrishna as, “However, the occurrence of Ramakrishna meant to turning back on the West, only he made it possible for the Indian intellectual to take the best the West had to give him, yet not give up the spiritual heritage of its forefathers.”

Sri Ramakrishna on the basis of his spiritual experiences preached the gospel of the unity of all religious. In his opinion individual soul is one with supreme soul; therefore service of an individual is the service of God. He made religion as liberating force. His tradition of dynamic religion was handed over to this disciple, Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda propagated his master’s religious teaching in India and abroad. The age of Indian renaissance reaches its glorious height with effort of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{13}} \text{Iyanger 52}\]
2.2 SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE VICTORIAN PERIOD:

The age division of nineteenth century corresponds to the predominant writer of its time viz., Age of Tennyson; and also, corresponds to the historical age to Victorian age. The Victorian or the Age of Tennyson covers the period from 1832 to 1887, strictly speaking, the Victorian era extends 1837 to 1901. But the significance of Victorian period lasts from 1832 to 1887, till the year of Queen Victorian’s Jubilee period. That the literature of any particular period is intimately connected to its social background is an undeniable fact. In this connection Crompton Rickett Writes, "The closer approximation of literature to social life is very marked in the Victorian era."\textsuperscript{14}

The age is remarkable in many ways in the history of England, it was very complex owing to the various growth of new emerging situations in various fields. There were a number of thinkers who favoured the progress made by Victorians, whereas others frowned at the values held dear by the Victorians. While Macaulay spoke highly, the achievement, of the Victorians, Ruskin and Caryle, Arnold, Lytton Starchey and Trollope opposed the soul-killing materialism of the age.

As stated above the complexity of the age, the age reflected an area of material opulence, political consciousness, democratic reforms, industrial and mechanical progress, scientific advancement, social unrest, educational expansion, empire, building and religious uncertainty. There were two types of thinkers who

expressed the two classes. One class represented that they were well satisfied with the progress made by Victorians, while the other group consisted of aiming a scathing criticism of the values held dear by the Victorians.

The second group consisted of writers like Ruskin, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, Lytton Startchey and Trollope who were all basically critics and raised frowns of disfavour against the soul-killing materialism of the age. But whatever may be the defects of the Victorian way of life, the age witnessed glorious epoch in the history as well as literature. There was commendable contribution in the field of poetry, prose and fiction. The age was characterized as the age of peace and prosperity, although there were disturbance generated from Crimean war and French Revolution.

The peaceful region of the Victorian period was conductive to the material advancement and Industrial progress. The Industrial Revolution of the age had converted the agrarian economy of England to an industrial economy. Boris Ford comments this scene as, “Agriculture itself had become thoroughly dominated by a business spirit.”

Many factories and mills were opened at important centres and thus making England the world of machines. The Industrial revolution brought in its wake social unrest and economic distress among the masses. Industrial revolution was sole responsible for the creation of the privileged capitalist class, and mill-owners, rolling in wealth and also the semi-starved and ill-clad class of labourers and

factory workers who showed dissatisfaction with their miserable lot. The newly emerged class of landed aristocracy and mill owners looked with contempt the miserable lot of the factory workers. The workers did not have the bright prospective; they have to dwell in the slum areas without having basic amenities of life. These were sorrowful tales witnessed in the lives of the poor. Writers like Dickens, Ruskin, and Carlyle, Matthew Arnold exposed the existing evils in the society with their search light.

In the Victorian Society reformative movements started to come into existence in order to ameliorate the lot of the down-trodden and under dogs of an affluent society. And increasing large number of Victorian literary men and women, philanthropic social reformers developed in them a humanist attitude to life not out of any creed and dogma, but out of love and loyalty to their unfortunate brethren. There was an utopian concept behind the extension of suffrage at all spheres of life. David Daiches observes this phenomenon as," Reform movements were on the whole based on the view that the widen the view that the wider the suffrage was extended the better things would be, while utilitarian attempts to work out the greatest happiness of the greatest number of could be assured of providing some sort of pragmatic test of the degree to which the people of England were achieving or had the possibility of achieving the good life."\textsuperscript{16}

The above scene is presented in the works of Carlyle, Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell. These literary artists with their crusading zeal bring about salutary

reforms in the social and economic life of the country. This very sympathy and importance given to the masses gave rise to Reform Bills which heralded the birth of democratic consciousness among Victorian People. Though there were discordant voices against democracy by Tennyson and Carlyle, but the sweeping tide could not be stemmed.

Various reform bills enacted from time to time have granted victory right to more and more people. The long struggle of Anglo-Saxons for personal liberty was realized with democracy becoming the established order of the day. As a result the House of Commons remained no longer an oligarchy. The expectation that was raised by French Revolution (1789) came to be fulfilled. This was in conjunction with the expectation raised by French Revolution which was fulfilled. This impact of democracy on the literature was also evident. With this democratic spirit common occupies the focus of attention in the most works of literature.

The process of rapid democratization gave ample opportunities for the poor. Crompton-Rickett has the following observation made on the change towards betterment of the poor as, "A great power was now in their hands; the next important step was the securing that the power should be rightly used and in 1870 we have the famous Education Act – that system of National Education of which Arnold so warmly approved."

Thus with the rapid expansion of the reading public, there emerged the new patrons of literature. And the writers were bound to cater to these new classes of readers. The effect of democratic spirit of Victorian Literature can also be seen in

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17 Rickett 405.
the unprecedented expansion of journalistic activity and the serialized novels of Thackery, Dickens and others.

The population growth in the Victorian age was phenomenal, and the Victorians were very proud of such growth. It had its advantage in empire building and establishing its hegemony in such countries – where the progress of civilization was at slower pace. In this regard Matthew Arnold says, “Population, again and bodily health and vigour are things which nowhere treated in such unintelligent, misleading exaggerated way as in England.”

The Victorian age is an age of Science with conducive intellectual atmosphere. there were many inventions and discoveries that had seen their broad day light. The man of science was regarded no more an academic recluse, but as a social figure exercising a deep and profound influence on the social and educated life of the age. Victorians had derived much material benefits with the blessings of the scientific advancement. Inspite of the advance of science and scientific discoveries the general tenor of life was still governed by religious and moral considerations.

The family life of the Victorians was well-knit children had a obey their parents and had a respect them. In the family circle the role of women was restricted. She had to cultivate democratic virtues, rear up children and look after home and health. In general status of women was inferior to men.

Study of Victorian background will not be complete without referring to the Victorian Compromise. Victorians sought a happy compromise with their radical problems. Victorians never yielded to the extreme viewpoint; they rather achieved pleasing compromise. This was their striking virtue. Such compromise was perceptible in the three branches of life. The political life of the country witnessed compromise between aristocracy and democracy. Amidst the claims of the rising masses, they equally defended the rights of aristocracy. They had perfect faith in the progress but were not ready to welcome emerging changes disturb the settled order of life. Progressive, ideals were reconciled with conservative leanings for an established order of society. In the field of religion and science a satisfying compromise was affected. The advances made by new science were accepted, but the claims of old religion was not ignored.

In the matter of sex, the Victorian had their compromise. Sex problem was serious affair, unbridled sex was met with disfavour. Their stricter conscience forbade laxity in the matters of sex. However, they permitted indulgence of sex in the conjugal felicity of married life. They disfavoured physical passion and illegal gratification of sex impulse.

When we do the comparative analysis of British and Indian society during nineteenth century, we will confront common dominant forces working in both the societies. In England it is science and Democracy having its sway over the totality of Victorian Society. As William Hudson puts it, “But it is fortunately not difficult to indicate the two great dominant movements, or ‘main current’, as Brandes would call them, in the general life of the time. they are, in the political
and social spheres, the progress of democracy; in the intellectual sphere, the progress of science.”

In Indian context, it was British exploitation and its cultural and materialistic impact on Indian minds led to the various renaissance movements in the country to modernize, Hinduism M.K. Naik comments this scene as, “This was a period when English Education and Western ideas had begun to act as a great liberating force in a country which had been suffering from political instability for about a country and from social fossilization and intellectual stagnation for even much longer.”

The common scene that strikes our notice is the tug of war between the materialistic culture and spiritual culture. The spirit of Indian renaissance was actual fight waged against materialistic culture of the west. The religious and mighty minds like Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayananda, Keshab Chandra Sen, Sri Aurobindo and Vivekananda formed the motive force of this renaissance. They all fought against unwholesome effect of western culture. This religious revival laid stress on the spiritualistic aspect of life. Swami Vivekananda emphasized that the national spirit of India lies in its spirituality. And India can be better understood with its spiritualistic mind. And life cannot be fully understood and lived perfectly in the light of its externalities. India renaissance was effectively achieved by Ramkrishna and his disciple Vivekananda.

Britain too had been facilitating between materialistic cult and spirituality. The raising of wave of materialism which came in the wake of the development of science disturbed conscience of sensitive writers such as Carlyle, Arnold and Ruskin, who all of them directed their strokes at the very feudalism of the superstructure of Victorian materialistic values. Literature is nothing, if it does not make man aware of the higher values of life and turn him away from the blind cult of Mammon worship. That is why we see these sensitive writers attacking materialism. Thackery in his novel, Vanity Fair, attacked the rank materialism and the snobbery of the Victorian age. Matthew Arnold showed how all the three classes of society in England suffered from spiritual narrow mindedness and insensitiveness. Carlyle raised a prophet like voice against the brutality of the age of the machine whereas Ruskin released the vials of his words for all the so-called blessings of science and industrial revolution. Charles Dickens in his own peculiar way took Grand grind-like materialists to task.

From the above analysis made of the nineteenth century society Britain and India, it is clear that sensitive men in India and Britain as critics of society have waged their war against soul killing materialism of the society. The reforming zeal and balancing force both existed in Victorian Society as well as Indian Society.