Man, his growth, development and realization is the perennial theme of Advaita Vedānta. The truths that the seers of Advaita Vedānta proclaimed ages ago are of contemporary interest in every age because they are the fruits of a detached and rational, sustained and sincere pursuit of truth and more important because they concern the whole of mankind and not just a mere sect of it. Advaita Vedānta has best been described by Julian Huxley as a 'science of human possibilities'. It is man in search of values, in search of quality, in search of the moral, aesthetic, and spiritual depths of his own self. Advaita Vedānta in this way holds a great sense of relevance in modern age for it marks the development of man's knowledge or reason as the unfettered agent of life's advance to spiritual truth with character excellence as its basic corollary.

The modern predicament is that under the influence of science and technology which are becoming universal the hold of religion an people's mind is on the wane. What needs to be understood by man is that science by itsel cannot answer the whole of man's needs because for purposes of action he requires at least a system of moral beliefs. And moral action and ethical beliefs bring man to the threshold of religion.

According to the teachings of Swāmi Vivēkānanda, belief may be difficult but the need for believing is inescapable. For man to live without a faith is impossible. Men insist on believing in something rather than submit to an unknown fear. It has been
seen that no matter when and where man lives, Man's religious needs have always been with him. To bear the sorrows of life man needs strength, to face the daily battle for survival, he needs some protection, in the hour of conflict, he needs assurance, in the hour of grief, he needs comfort. and, above all, to soothe the pangs of conscience, man needs a faith. In fact it can be said that religions ideas are forms through which the essential nature of man necessarily finds an expression. Again to find a way to live peacefully inspite of the forces which tend to thrust man into destructive conflict and at the same time to enable man in his eternal quest for a purpose in his very existence, religion is a crucial necessity in life.

In today's world where confusion prevails everywhere, it has been brought out that man in his own major burden and problem and to solve this problem, what he needs is not more of science and technology, but he needs, on the other hand, the cultivation of the science of religion and the science of self-realization. The only antidote to this state of chaos, the prevailing antipathy amidst mankind and the ensuing hatred, fear and violence all around, is true religion. That again would be a religion which is one, not merely conforming to reason but to that realm which offers to reason and to understanding its supreme opportunity - and such a religion, according to the enlightened view of Swāmi Vivekananda is none less than the religion of the Advaita Vedānta.

It is seen that religion and science, faith and reason represent the various aspects of human nature. man have in them
all these sides but differ as the distribution of emphasis on these aspects differ. So what would be the best requirement of true religion to hold good today is one that would cater to all the needs of the present, disrupted state of affairs. Advaita Vedānta is the religion is not mere external code of religion but it is an attitude of the spirit and a way of life. The religion of Advaita Vedānta is at its best scientific and secular, humanistic and at its acme spiritual. The purpose of Advaita Vedānta religion is to help man to discipline his whole being, his mind and will, so that by knowing the divine potentialities of his self, he would be able to control nature or that which is non-spiritual and use it for spiritual ends. That there is no opposition between spirit and nature is an established fact of the Advaita Vedānta, but the future of humanity lies in the attempt of man in using the knowledge and truth of Advaita Vedānta in life. To quote the words of John Dewey: "All I know about the future of progress is that it depends upon man to say whether he wants it or not".

There is a freshness about Advaita Vedānta and its divine message that has remained unchanged throughout history, down to the present age and in this way exerts its influence and relevance in all walks of life. This is primarily due to the fact that the Advaita Vedānta is not a mere name, creed or dogma, but it is an approach to reality, a way of life and is that which is

a constat self analysis. The Advaitic Vedāntic outlook in this way is symbolic of the most universal and perennial outlook, which makes for consolidation of life in its most meaningful sense and calling for the dignity of personality as a basic tenet in the nature of the reality.

The most important aspect of the Advaita Vedānta is that it points to a transvaluation of being as spiritual and life as divine. Again, by highlighting this Advaita Vedānta does not simply tell us to rise above relatively and become free from all such relative values, but the Advaita Vedānta wants us to understand the structure of the Non-relative, which makes it possible for all the world of the relative to exist. Advaita Vedānta says, "Life has a value against bad and cruel living, peace and harmony have value against violence and discord, universal life has value against narrow domestic life and divine life has value against animal life" . Thus Advaita Vedānta does not teach negation of life but what it propounds is that life in its cosmic theme is significant and that we should adopt in order to have a good and meaningful life, this technique of consolidation wherein all our dealings, whether they be ethical, social, political or even secular and scientific, should subserve to this law of universal being.

No doubt the modern spirit is often described as utilitarian and rationalistic or scientific, but as Swāmi Vivēkānanda

believed Advaita appeals to the modern man as it answers both these requirements to a great extent. As is the science of religion, for religion, as expounded in Advaita takes up the investigation of the mystery of experience where the other positive sciences leave off. It then by logical inference makes out an explanatory theory and also recommends a way for action for the realization of the goal as indicated in the theory. In this way no truth is presented only from a dogmatic standpoint but its point of view is purely scientific and rational, though in the ultimate analysis this truth wholly depends on the Sruti or revelation. But again this revelation is not unique but is realizable - It has been so down the ages and can be experienced even now. Swami Vivekananda says, "Experience is the only source of knowledge. In the world religion is the only science where there is no surety, because it is not taught as a science of experience. This should not be. There is always, however a small group of man who teach religion from experience. They are called mystics, and these mystics in every religion speak the same tongue and teach the same truth. This is the real science of religion". The fact is that, science as such is not tied down to any particular order of facts, it is unlimited in scope and the various departments of science starting with the study of separate fields tend, in their advanced stages to break through their particular boundaries and merge into one convering scientific search, the search for the meaning of total

1. Swami Vivekananda complete works Vol. VI, Sixth edn. P.81
experience. Thus the idea of Advaita Vedānta as a science of
religion - the science of the facts of the inner world of man, as
expounded by Swāmi Vivekananda to modern age can in no way be
ignored for it has far reaching significance for today and all
time to come.

Advaita Vedānta is that wisdom which directs the actions of
man from the deep depth of spiritual intuition making the life
lived in this world worthwhile, not only by advancing scientific
knowledge which although acknowledges that there is an essential
reality in the universe which is within every object, yet stops
at matter, but also by redeeming man from his bound position of
biological existence. Advaita Vedānta, as uncovering the spirit
of man, opens the way to a higher reality behind matter which is
the Ātman. The Advaita Vedānta recognising the transcendent as
Brahman goes further in establishing an identity between them
both that is Ātman and Brahman. In this way Advaita elevates the
position of man from sheer physical and physiological phenomena
to the dignified status of the divine. The modern idea of human
unity and individual dignity derive strong support from this view
of Advaita Vedānta. Again the fundamental position in the
cosmology of both Advaita Vedānta and modern science is what
Swāmi Vivekananda calls, 'the postulate (of the ultimate reality)
of a self-evolving cause'. And Advaita Vedānta calls this
universal spiritual principle - the Brahman.

1. Swāmi Vivekananda - Science & Religion (Bangalore
University, 1976) P.27
"Where from all these entities are born, by which, being born they abide, into which, at the time of dissolution, they enter - I seek to know that; that is Brahman". In this manner in recent centuries this knowledge of unity has been advanced radically and widely by modern science, the impact of which falls wholesome on the Advaita Vedānta, so much so that it is not long before one finds the spirituality of science and the spirituality of religion flowing as a united stream to fertilize and impart to human life and character depth of faith, understanding along with an open outlook and sympathy.

Another important feature that makes the Advaita Vedānta relevant for modern times is its fearless quest of the truth. The modern man inclines to base his belief on reason and Advaita Vedānta in this aspect is beyond his disappointment. Swāmī Vivēkānanda believed that when religion refuses to take the help of reason, it weakens itself and Advaita teaches strength and only strength. He says "Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to science and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of religion? In my opinion, this must be so; and I am also of the opinion that sooner it is done, the better. If a religion is destroyed by such investigations, it was then all the time useless unworthy superstition, and the sooner it goes the better. I am thoroughly convinced that its destruction would be the best

1. Taittirīya Upanīṣad III. 1
thing that could happen. All that is dross will be taken off, no doubt, but the essential parts of religion will emerge triumphant out of this investigation. Not only will it be made scientific - as scientific, at least, as any of the conclusions of physics or chemistry - but it will have greater strength, because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth which 1 religion has". Thus a spiritual view of religion, as different from a creedal or dogmatic view, makes religion cultivate not only a spirit of toleration, questioning, and inquiry in its own sphere but also encourages it in all walks of life.

Today's modern life is very complex with several outstanding problems and man caught in its web finds himself always tense and in fear of failing to keep up his place in life. Advaita Vedānta through its spiritual and philosophical tenets and yogic practices, giving man the very idea of the purpose and scheme of life, comes as a solution to many problems. For one thing it turns the minds of men away from the conflicts of competition after vain pleasure and materialism by pointing out the goal of life as one non-material. Again it is the Advaitic idea of oneness of all life which uproots all reasons for fear and rivalry. Fear is that which is born due to the knowledge of a second but Advaita Vedānta knows no second (Kaha Shoka Ko Bhaya Ekatramana pasyanha). where there is one and only one spirit indwelling in everyone what is there to fear.

Swāmi Vivēkānanda says, "Manifestation and not creation, is the word of science today, and the Hindu is only glad that what he has been cherishing in his bosom for ages is going to be taught in more forcible language and with further light from the latest conclusions of science." This concept of oneness also gives the foundation for universal brotherhood where no privileges are needed for all are equal. It is this ethics of oneness that is most helpful today in bringing about a more stable and secure social order.

Advaita Vedānta is of immense importance today for it has in it, besides spiritual reckonings, also the capacity to import a democratic spirit, of sharing, of discussion, of free thinking and of taking into consideration the view of the other man. And this is very important as a pre-requisite for all democratic development today. The spirit of liberalism, synthesis and freedom that ensue from the Advaita Vedānta are such codes that cannot be overlooked or avoided by modern age. For if at all these concepts are in demand there are so in the present state of the world. Today when the world is being torn apart by narrow provacalism, segmentation and the domination of might the paramount need is that version of religion which will inculcate not only spirituality, not only self development through education, wealth and power, but also one that assures freedom of self, and self-restraint, reverence for life, self dedication, decent behaviour and benevolence - and all this as Swāmi Vivēkānanda claims is what is Advaita Vedanta.