CHAPTER - V

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This chapter is devoted to a fairly comprehensive analysis of the central aspects of Swami Vivekananda's political thought. The main concepts examined in this connection are nature of the individual, his liberty on various freedoms, equality, and the relations of these to one another. His thought is characterised by his advocacy of democracy, humanism, spiritual socialism. He deals with the basic problems of the Hindu society such as caste system, priest-craft, the neglect of the down-trodden. He speaks of tradition and modernity, secularism and religion, and, finally, the state of man, society and the relations of these with the state and government.

Vivekananda's Concept of Man and Society

Man is considered differently by different thinkers. The scientist looks upon man as complicated machine or an object that can be dissolved into a few pounds of carbon, a few quarters of
water, some lime, a little phosphorus and sulphur, a pinch of iron and silicon, a handful of mixed salts, all scattered and recombined. Man shares in common with the animal world the biological activities such as hunger, copulation, sleep, fear etc.

The scientism (materialistic view) reduced man to a cog in a wheel, in this great universe. Man has lost his supreme position and has become a weakling, subject to all sorts of push and pull exerted by the environmental conditions. He behaves like a robot and is turned into a doll or a toy. He is treated as a machine, an intelligent machine, without a soul.

The materialistic view takes man as an economic man, thinking always in terms of gain and loss. Man thinks that he is a social being only to exploit the other people in the community. He has become self-centred, greedy and narrow-minded. He is a clever creature among the animals and the poet. Pope, has rightly said that man has become the greatest danger to mankind.

The naturalist looks upon man as a late product of evolution. In the words of Julian Huxley, man stands at the crossroads of the evolution. Some biologists describe man as the one that is naturally selected and not as the one that is super-naturally elected?
Darwin gave a severe blow to the spiritual concept of man, describing him as a product of evolution.

Freud's discovery of the unconscious and his description of its functions have given a go-by to the cherished doctrine of man's freedom of will. Man is the plaything of the unconscious and the complexes.

Marx has described man as determined by his historical and economic and social conditions.

Swamiji, at the very outset, rejects all these pictures of man. He says that they are partial and superficial. They are based on the picture of an apparent man only. They take into account only bodily propensities and man's external behaviour. Swamiji does not deny the importance of all these views and theories. But he feels that the real man is beyond these individual descriptions.

Vivekananda's concept of man is very close to the ancient Hindu concept of man. It resembles the concept of man put forward in the Vedanta and neo-Vedanta. According to Swamiji, man is not only body, senses, intellect and mind, but he is also a spiritual (divine) being. He is verily God himself. Man and
God are identical. They do not differ from each other. They are not distinct. They are one and the same. The real nature of man is moral and spiritual. He describes man as that which is not all body but as something which is infinitely higher than all the animal creation of God. He refuses to accept the discrimination among men based on colour, race, birth, language, religion, nationality and culture. Swamiji, in his lecture delivered in London, discusses the real nature of man. To him man is neither body nor mind. The real man is one and infinite, the omnipresent spirit and the apparent man is only an imitation of the real man. He is a dim reflection of the real man who is beyond cause and effect and not bound by time and space. He is always free. The apparent man is limited by time and causality. For the real soul, there is no question of birth and death. The real is unchangeable, immovable and absolute.

Man according to him is the greatest being that exists in the world. This world of work is the best place for him. Here he has the chance to become perfect. Vivekananda thinks that even an angel, to become perfect, has to become man. Human life is a wonderful opportunity. He says, "The greatest of all lies is that we are bodies, which we never were nor even can be. It is the greatest of all lies that we are mere men; we are the
God of the universe. In worshipping God we have been always worshipping our own hidden self.*

He describes a human being in his physical and psychological make-up. He says, "We see, then, that this human being is composed first of this external covering, the body; secondly, the finer body, consisting of mind, intellect, and egoism. Behind them is the real self of man.**

He distinguished between the physical and spiritual nature of man. The philosophy of Vivekananda is an organised unity of the physical and the spiritual. The physical nature of man includes the bodily, the biological and the psychological aspects of man's nature. To Vivekananda man is superior to other beings even in matters of physical powers. Man is physically superior to many animals because his physical nature is better organised and exhibits a greater unity. The presence of brain system in the body distinguishes man from other animals and gives him a unique status in the world. His uniqueness is based on his spiritual nature. His real nature goes beyond his physical nature. The true nature of man is soul-force (Atman).


Bertrand Russell, a great western thinker, speaks of at least three distinct ways in which an individual can be viewed in relation to society:

i. As a common man -- the old-fashioned democracy.

ii. As a hero -- fascism.

iii. As a cog in a machine -- communism.

Vivekananda's view of man comprehends all these points of view in different situations and asserts something more. Vivekananda feels that the basic nature of man is simple and uniform. It may have infinite modes of impressions. The real individuality belongs to the infinite which does not change. He denies individuality to all that changes. We have no individuality, yet we are struggling towards individuality that is infinite, that is the real nature of man. According to Swami Vivekananda, the human personality has two diametrically opposed aspects. The one is the instinctive, appetitive and impulsive aspect. The other is the supreme, abiding individuality. Swamiji does not agree with the communist view that the individual is a cog in a machine. At the same time, he does not believe in individualism. He only believes in the supreme individuality.
Vivekananda says, "Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to truth or die. Societies should be moulded upon truth, and truth has not to adjust itself to society. If such a noble truth as unselfishness cannot be practised in society, it is better for man to give up society and go into the forest." Further he says, "... why boast of your society? That society is the greatest where the highest truths become practical. That is my opinion; and if society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so; and the sooner, the better." In order to explain the nature of society and its relation to man, he cites the example of a lion cub being brought up among lambs. It wrongly considered itself as the one among the lambs. It behaved like a lamb and had forgotten its real nature, that of a lion. One day it saw its image in the flowing water of the river. It suddenly started roaring. It realised its real nature. Similarly the real man wrongly assumes that he is an apparent man and behaves like an apparent man in


society. In reality he is divine. But he has forgotten his spiritual nature which is free from the fetters of social conditions. Social conditions and influences are real in so far as man forgets his simple and original nature which is nothing but divinity.

Swamiji's concept of society looks upon all as equals in the eyes of God and in the vision of Dharma (religion). His concept of society is democratic, not in the formal sense of the term but in the truly spiritual sense. Society, according to Swami Vivekananda, may be described as the good of all. It is not Bentham's doctrine of "the greatest good of the greatest number." It is the spiritual society. Swamiji wanted to build such a society. It is an ideal society which is classless, casteless, free from exploitation. Swamiji's nature of ideal society seems to be a modern version of the Varnashrama system, devoid of its ancient limitations. The renunciation in this system is not to mean abandoning the world and returning to the forest but dedication of oneself to the service of humanity.

Society is not a natural but a social institution. He believed in the gradual development and decay of social institutions. Society is only a passing phase. It is not essential to human perfection. Vivekananda says, "Society did
not exist ages ago, possibly will not exist ages hence. Most probably it is one of the passing stages through which we are going towards a higher evolution, and any law that is derived from society alone cannot be eternal, cannot cover the whole ground of man's nature.** He holds that "The aggregate of many individuals is called Samashti (the whole), and each individual is called Vyashti (a part). You and I -- each -- are Vyashti, society is Samashti."** So, in the view of Vivekananda, society is a loose collection of individuals and the existence of society is based on social fitness. Society is not totalitarian. It cannot wield an absolute authority over individuals and groups. Each individual or group is an independent unit. There is mutual service and cooperation in society.

According to Vivekananda, the distinction between the materialistic and spiritualistic nature of society is fundamental. He argues that attempts have been made periodically to establish social life on the principles of materialism and spiritualism. Society, the actual and objective society, will always be a mixture

of good and evil. All societies and governments are comparatively evil. Societies based on materialism, such as the Greek and Roman ones, have perished. To get rid of the weakness of the materialistic society, it is necessary to emphasise truth and prescribe it as the eternal ideal society. A society which does not value truth will die. Morality naturally forms the basis of the spiritualist society. He believes that, in a way, formation of a society is a form of renunciation. Society is social and organic. If a society is based on spiritualism, it will last much longer. He believes that India has been such a society where the highest truths have become practical. There is a lesson in this for the other societies: they must enshrine truth at their centre."

the problems relating to man's individual life than with those pertaining to his social or collective existence. These two sides of human existence, though inseparable, have yet their distinct and vital aspects which require a specific consideration. We have to see in the political philosophy of Vivekananda, how these sides of human existence have been developed. In order to understand the issues between individuals and society, our study of Vivekananda's views on sociology and history may be of some use. Some of Vivekananda's insights in the nature and operation of democracy, aristocracy, autocracy, collectivism, imperialism, capitalism and labour etc. are enlightening and instructive.

For a discussion of his views the various theories may be classified into two main categories: the individualistic and the collectivistic. He points out that the individualistic theory traces the value of the individual at the expense of society. The collectivistic theory takes the opposite view and emphasises the significance of society at the cost of the individual. The opposition between the theories has often led to the superiority of the one over the other. The extreme individualistic theories like the social contract theory or the anarchistic theory condemn society as an evil. It is contended that society is not necessary for the existence or
development of man. This is not a sound view. Man's dependence on society is not a temporary or dispensable factor. It is the very condition of his existence and survival. Society is constantly needed for man's growth and perfection. Aristotle considered man to be a social animal. This is only one side of the relationship. Society is equally dependent on the individual. Without individuals there can be no society.

Swami Vivekananda would like to retain the best in the Indian culture and civilisation of the past but would like to rid them of the evils. He is also much influenced by the sound features of the western culture and civilisation but rejects the evils that follow from the west's materialistic philosophy. His ideal society possesses the best qualities of the Indian past and the modern west. For a casual reader Swamiji may appear to be a bundle of contradictions. But he is not really so. He wants to evolve a model society wherein the individual and society are mutually essential for each other's progress. We find in his concept of society a strong influence of the western ideas. But in his concept of man we find a great impact of the Upanishadic view of man.

We find that, in his writings, Vivekananda uses society and humanity as identical terms. Sister Nivedita says,
"I understood him to mean 'humanity' by 'society'."** Vivekananda identified society with state. S.L. Mukherjee observes, "Vivekananda used the term 'nation' as a synonym for society."** Swamiji, "equated ends with means, equality with freedom, freedom with God." His Vedantic concept of unity of things unfolded to him the concept of freedom, equality and democracy. Vivekananda makes a distinction between the individual and society. To Vivekananda, the individual is an end in himself. Man, he believed, by nature is pure and free. His idea of inherent divinity and freedom of the individual leads him to minimise the role of society. S.L. Mukherjee says that Vivekananda considers society as a loose collection of individuals. It is not a natural and eternal institution.***


Freedom

"The Vedantic concept of freedom is inseparable from the Vedantic concept of individual. To Vivekananda man is divine."* Secondly, to Vivekananda, God, freedom and truth are one and the same. They are identical. He pointed out that "... freedom is the same as God."** Freedom, according to Vivekananda, is absolute, indivisible and all inclusive. To him, the material freedom is inseparable from the spiritual freedom, the former fulfils the latter. His interpretation of freedom is positive and he feels that freedom is necessary for every individual in the day-to-day secular life. His concept of freedom leads to the right of equality. All are equal because they are parts of the absolute. Sri Aurobindo says, "Vivekananda was influenced by the European democratic thought when he said that everybody is a Brahmin."***


*** V. Chidambaram, Sri Aurobindo At Evening Talk (Mother India, January 1971).
Freedom without equality is meaningless. He said, "No man and no nation can attempt to gain physical freedom without physical equality, nor mental freedom without mental equality."* Vivekananda regards the concept of equality as most significant, pleads for equality of human beings and criticises the various privileges which promote inequalities in societies. Equality in his case was not absolute equality. He believes that human inequalities are temporary and changing. An individual's initiative and growth can and do overcome inequalities. In order to achieve such equality one should welcome the process of levelling up of individuals. The downtrodden should try to rise higher and higher. Individuals who have attained a high level should not be pulled down. His concept of freedom is based on his idea of social evolution. To him, the individual and social growth depends on freedom. His concept of freedom is spiritualistic. It implies a deeper realisation of the eternal truth. The freedom, as viewed by Vivekananda, is eternal and infinite. It is inalienable and immovable. Ultimately freedom and God are one and the same. One can trace the influence of the Upanishads on his concept of freedom. He is in agreement with the ideal freedom advocated by the seers of the Upanishads. To them, the universe rises in

freedom, rests in freedom and melts away in freedom. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru observes, "The authors of the Upanishads were passionately attached to the idea of freedom and wanted to see everything in terms of it. Swami Vivekananda was always emphasising this aspect." Sister Nivedita says, "Vivekananda preached Mukti instead of heaven; enlightenment instead of salvation ..."**

Vivekananda makes a distinction between absolute freedom and relative freedom. Spiritual freedom is freedom in the real sense. It is complete, perfect, ideal. It is not limited by time and space. The material or economic, the individual and social freedoms are a means to spiritual freedom. Spiritual freedom is highest form of freedom. The other freedoms are of secondary importance.

**Spiritual Freedom**

Spiritual freedom is inherent in all forms of life, whether living or non-living. Vivekananda says, "Wherever there is life,


there is this search for freedom and that freedom is the same as God. Necessarily this freedom gives us mastery over all nature and is impossible without knowledge."* He holds the view that freedom is the very heart of reality. It is present in all things as an inner urge for its self-realisation. It is the journey of God from the atom to highest form. Freedom is the goal of all living creatures. It can be realised only through spiritual knowledge. It gives us command over all nature. Man by nature is free and pure. Individual freedom is a journey from the lowest to the highest life. Freedom reaches its end by successive lives. This is the implication of the theory of reincarnation. Reincarnation "advances the freedom of the human soul."** Vivekananda explains the nature of the freedom of the soul on the basis of the Hindu belief in the theory of reincarnation. There is a gradual development of the freedom of the soul from one life to another. Freedom is necessary for the spiritual growth of the individual. It is the individual's natural and indestructible right. Man must rediscover himself from within. Vivekananda says, "That ideal of freedom that you


perceived was correct, but you projected it outside yourself, and that was your mistake. Bring it nearer and nearer, until you find that it was all the time within you, it was the self of your own self. That freedom was your own nature, and this Maya never bound you."* Vivekananda holds that freedom is the very nature of the self. Self and freedom are not different but due to the projection they appear different.

Freedom is not a gift of society, it is an inherent possession of the individual. Since the individual is spiritual in nature, nothing can determine his freedom. Sisir Kumar Mitra rightly points out, "Freedom will be of little consequence to India unless her children recover the soul, the inherent spirituality of the race, and rebuild their life on it. That is the true meaning of India's freedom."** The true meaning of India's freedom lies in understanding the nature of the soul. It is spiritual and its race has to rebuild its life on the spiritual foundation. Then only there will be a change in the life of India's people. He explains that freedom is not only a biological necessity but is also a spiritual element of life.

He holds that the spiritualistic concept of freedom rules out competitive freedom among individuals and stands for helping others. This idea of freedom develops the individual's identity with society. It encourages growth and freedom of all individuals. Sri Aurobindo remarks, "The organisation of human society tends to develop the altruistic element in man which makes for life and battles with and conquers asanaya Mritu. It is therefore not the struggle for life, or at least not the struggle for our own life, but the struggle for the life of others which is the most important term in evolution ..."* This remark of Aurobindo would suggest that Vivekananda does not accept the Darwinian theory of evolution which emphasises the struggle for one's own life whereas the freedom of the soul in his theory of evolution highlights the altruistic nature of man. Therefore his freedom is not for the struggle for one's own selfish end, but for a spiritual quest for finding the oneness of life. So, to Vivekananda, individual freedom is not a threat to social freedom. He says, "When human beings are clearly aware, most awake, they feel, that in some sense which cannot be clearly articulated, they are instruments for the expression of the spirit, 'vessels' of the spirit. When we realise this, we outgrow individualism

and espouse the cause of our fellow-men because we and our fellow-men are the expression of the same spirit."* This is the essence of spiritual freedom.

** Individual Freedom

Vivekananda's concept of spiritual freedom is supreme and unique; at the same time, Vivekananda has not rejected the study of individual, social and economic freedom. They may not be as significant as spiritual freedom but in his view they are to be taken seriously and explained thoroughly.

Individual freedom is fundamental and is certainly vital. Freedom is the natural property of all individuals. Every individual must develop free body, mind and spirit. Vivekananda says, "Liberty does not certainly mean the absence of obstacle in the path of misappropriation of wealth etc. by you and me, but it is our natural right to be allowed to use our own body, intelligence or wealth according to our will, without doing any harm to others."** Individual liberty does not mean the


absence of obstacles. It is the natural right of one and all. But this is not a right to harm others. Vivekananda declares, "Freedom is the watchword. Be free! A free body, a free mind, and a free soul! That is what I have felt all my life! I would rather be doing evil freely than be doing good under bondage."*

Freedom makes the individual perfect and thereby it makes society perfect. Individual freedom and initiative are the foundation of the strength and vitality of society. Swami Ranganathananda says, "The evolution of this citizen is the end of politics, as it is also the highest social end."** Politics, in the view of Swami Ranganathananda, is a means for the fullest development of a citizen. Freedom must lead to the development of citizens. That is the goal of politics. The highest aim of society is the fullest growth of men and women as ideal citizens. While fully encouraging the growth and freedom of individuals, Vivekananda sounded a note of caution in the practice of such freedom. He warns that "The idea that you can make others grow and help their growth, that you can direct and guide them, always retaining for yourself the freedom of the teacher, is


nonsense, a dangerous lie, which has retarded the growth of millions and millions of human beings in this world. Let men have the light of liberty. That is the only condition of growth.**

He criticises the people in the past who made freedom their own monopoly. He points out that the idea that they alone are the persons qualified to guide others is meaningless. The light of liberty is inherent in every individual. It is the real directing principle for their growth. Vivekananda says, "To advance oneself towards freedom — physical, mental, and spiritual — and help others to do so, is the supreme prize of man. Those social rules which stand in the way of the unfoldment of this freedom are injurious, and steps should be taken to destroy them speedily. Those institutions should be encouraged by which men advance on the path of freedom."**

The important goal of man is to develop his physical, mental and spiritual freedom and it is equally his duty to help others to do the same. According to him, the main function of society is not to hinder individual freedom but to help it. Society is a social agency. It should not encroach on the freedom of an individual. His concept of freedom requires us to consider the rights of


individuals and society. If there is no equality of rights, liberty loses its meaning. He believes in the inherent freedom of an individual and thereby he defends the equal rights and opportunities for their growth. Freedom is not to be monopolised by any section of society.

The rights of individuals are natural. They are inalienable. Rights to liberty, equality, family, freedom of thought and property etc. are the examples of natural rights of an individual. Vivekananda condemns the special privileges in society. These privileges are harmful. They affect the individual growth and dehumanise people. They perpetuate social inequality and injustice. Vivekananda, for example, condemned the privileges of the priests and the rich sections of society. S.L.Mukherjee says, "... privilege-breaking and elimination of all propititations constitute the mission of his (Vivekananda's) Vedantic freedom in its social character."* Vivekananda wanted to eliminate the process of giving gifts to some people. The main aim of the Vedantic freedom is to put an end to such practices in society. Privileges mean social slavery. He identified slavery with tyranny. In the matter of social equality, Swamiji

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had been much impressed by the western society. As Mukherjee notes, "The ideal of social equality was perhaps the most important in the list of other merchandise that he (Vivekananda) wanted to import from America and plant on the Indian soil."*

**Social Freedom**

Vivekananda bases his views on individual and social freedom on the Indian philosophical thought. An individual by nature is divine, according to the seers of the Upanishads, but society is not considered in this way. Commenting on this point, the noted historian and diplomat, K.M. Panikkar, says, "This doctrine of divinity in man may appear to be merely a metaphysical hypothesis incapable of positive proof. Its validity is not the point at issue. The fact which is of importance to us is that it is accepted as a cardinal article of faith by every Indian, and consequently it has certain social results which are of very great importance. The belief that every sentient being carries within himself a spark of the divine is the origin of the conception of the inalienable worth of individual and its corollary of the limitations of the

absolutism of external forces. If it is accepted that the individual, however lowly and however insignificant in himself, has over-riding rights by virtue of his personality, then this involves a denial of the right of the state, or the church or the community, to compel his obedience in matters affecting his conscience, or his beliefs."* Panikkar, in other words, has highlighted the presupposition of the Vedanta philosophy. It maintains that man by nature is part of God and freedom is his innate nature, it is inherent. Man is free by nature. The individual, great or small, has rights due to his divine nature. This is why the state or community, cannot force him to obey them. They cannot change and affect the beliefs or conscience of people. Society thus gets a secondary place. Vivekananda maintains that society is nothing but a group of individuals. In the view of Vivekananda, society can be evil. It is not necessary for an individual to live in society. He may or may not live in society. Therefore society is not necessary for him. Thus for the freedom and growth of an individual society is not a necessary condition.

This emphasis on individual freedom should not mean that Vivekananda ignores or subordinates social freedom. He gives

importance to social freedom as much as to individual freedom. Social freedom and individual freedom are not exclusive but are inclusive. They are not opposed to each other. They are complementary to each other. Society should encourage the individual and the individual should work for the promotion of social good. Individuals have an ethical obligation for the welfare of society. Vivekananda observes, "The individual's life is in the life of the whole, the individual's happiness is in the happiness of the whole." This implies the concept of Sarvodaya, that is, the welfare of one and all. The happiness of the individual and the happiness of society are interdependent. One requires the other. Individual freedom and social freedom are necessary for the welfare of all. B.G. Gokhale points out, "While Karma is social, Mukti is individual and it is only when the social role is played socially that individuality can find perfection." According to Vivekananda, perfection of the individual is possible through social participation. He combines in his view the social liberation and individual liberation. The ultimate goal of individual freedom is to expand and promote the freedom of others. Because,


according to the Indian philosophy, divinity expresses itself not only in the individual but also in the community. Thus the interests of the individual and society are not opposed to each other. He identifies the interests of the individual and society. If one realises one's true nature, the difference between individual freedom and social freedom disappears. The life of the individual is not separate from the life of society. Vivekananda says, "Man is individual and at the same time universal. It is while realising our individual nature that we realise that we realise even our national and universal nature."* The true nature of the self or the individual is both particular as well as universal. The realisation of oneself is the realisation of the divine and the divine is both particular and universal. Vivekananda argues that those who desire to be free should make others also free. He tries to remove the social restrictions which come in the way of the individual growth and freedom. Society should encourage a proper outlook to develop the individual freedom. At the same time social freedom should be growth-oriented and this should be a basis of individual freedom and equality. Social freedom and social equality are equally significant to the individual. These terms are not exclusive.

but are complementary. Vivekananda points out that "Being of one mind is the secret of society."** He pleads that society should raise the Chandala to the level of a Brahmin. "If there is inequality in nature, still there must be equal chance for all -- or if greater for some and less for some -- the weaker should be given more chance than the strong."** Thus, long back, Vivekananda held the view that those who are deprived of the basic necessities of life should be given greater scope to come up in life than those who have had the usual scope for ages. So he is always on the side of the poor and the forlorn. In a sense, some of the policies of the government of India today are giving a concrete shape to the vision of men like Vivekananda. In this context, it appears that Vivekananda is making contradictory statements, when he upholds individual rights on the one hand and social equality and liberty on the other. But, on a closer analysis, we will find that there is no contradiction. His attack is on social determinism of the Indian society, specially its authoritarian attitude. He says that the Indian society suppresses an individual's social life. Religious orthodoxy regiments the individual's life and freedom. The Indian society is a cramped


and rigid society. He has described the outlook of the Indian society as kitchen-room religion, "touch-me-not-ism." It has enforced caste distinctions and hierarchy. This is the fundamental cause for the backwardness of the Indian society. It separates, restricts and narrows. It will crumble before the advance of the modern spirit and ideals. F.R. Allchin adds that Vivekananda's "stress upon the role of the individual in society also seems to be outside the more narrowly Indian traditions of thought, and once more one may suspect that it derives at least indirectly from the climate of thought of nineteenth century European social reformers." This observation seems to be valid. According to the Indian tradition, the role of an individual is confined to his own liberation and not the betterment of society. It is obvious that the traditions of the Hindu society are narrow and limited and it is also a fact that the western reformers have influenced the minds of the thinkers like Vivekananda. Vivekananda desired to improve the Indian society, and remove its passivity. Social progress in India became difficult because of the traditional faith of people in the Smritis. Vivekananda believed that society has a right to replace the dead social institutions based on the Smritis. He is of the opinion that religion had nothing to do with social evils. Vivekananda argues that "The Hindu must not give

up his religion, but must keep religion within its proper limits and give freedom to society to grow."* He holds that the evils of the Hindu society have continued due to ignorance, poverty and so on. According to Vivekananda, the liberal spirit in India can grow by putting an emphasis on the separation of religion from social institutions. His liberal outlook on life led him to denounce the rigidity, narrowness, and exclusiveness of the Indian way of thinking of his time. He argues for social synthesis. Using Hegel's language, he says that social reaction is the thesis, social liberty, the antithesis, and social assimilation, the synthesis.

Vivekananda aimed at "A new India with Vedantic brain and Moslem body."** He rejected the social liberty of the west and spiritual liberty of the east as one-sided. He strongly argued for the happy marriage of the matter of the west and the spirit of the east. He stood for the fine harvest of the contribution of the eastern and western civilisations. He advocated the combination of the European social activism with India's religion.


Swamiji was a great optimist. He wanted to build an ideal society for India. About the ideal society, he says, "I would say, the combination, of the Greek mind, represented by the external European energy added to the Hindu spirituality, would be an ideal society for India."*

Economic Freedom

To appreciate the spiritual, the individual and the social freedom, according to Vivekananda, it is essential to grasp the essence of his economic freedom. Like many other traditional Sanyasins, Vivekananda never rejects or condemns material conditions or goods required for man. His spiritualism does not condemn the materialism required for society. He advocates the importance of physical conditions for the mental and spiritual development of man. He is not an ascetic who refused to enjoy the common joys of life.

Freedom for him means freedom from the wants of life. If there is no economic freedom, there will be no individual freedom. Economic freedom is the basis for the individual, social and

spiritual freedom. It is the foundation of all the freedoms. But one should be careful not to advocate the concept of freedom which encourages the exploitative and acquisitive nature of man. Freedom should be moral and conducive to others. S.L. Malhotra says, "The Vedantins are not economic individualists, though they admire many other principles of liberalism. Their ethical universalism cannot be reconciled to the egoistic individualism of the economic theory of the liberalism of the early nineteenth century." There is thus a difference between the Vedantic approach and the individualistic economic philosophy. While liberalism tends to lead to egoistic individualism, the ethical universalism of the Vedantins is designed to lead to altruistic economic freedom. Vivekananda says that after the basic needs of life are fulfilled, the individual should uplift himself by sacrificing his craze for the pleasures of life and the accumulation of wealth. Vivekananda never said that the individual should give up his material wants. One should enjoy one's wealth in the name of God. Wealth does not belong to anybody. It belongs all to God. All belongs to the Lord. The true meaning of wealth has been derived from the Latin word "weal." It means that which is used for the welfare of one and all. The individual should enjoy his wealth

but at the same time he should use it for the welfare of others too. Thus to Vivekananda, "Wealth is for distribution." This reminds us of the allied theory of the modern German economics, of E.F.Schumacher, who stresses the importance not of mass production but production for the mass. Vivekananda's concept of wealth comes very near the theory of trusteeship advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. As K.M.Munshi notes, "(Gandhiji) wanted property to be held by the legal owner in trust for those who needed it." This vision of Gandhiji is far ahead of his time. In a way, Vivekananda anticipated Mahatma Gandhi. Vivekananda's view is in tune with the traditional Hindu view as emphasised and illustrated in the Bhagavadgita. The Gita says, "The virtuous, who partake of what is left after sacrifice, are absolved of all sins. Those sinful ones who cook food for the sake of nourishing their body alone, eat only sin." The satisfaction of the material needs is necessary both for the individual as well as society. The practice of Dharma, i.e., social and economic duties, is to be undertaken by the individual as well as society. Both should engage in the worldly activity. Vivekananda stresses enjoyment before renunciation.

*** The Bhagavad Gita, Chapter III.
He believed that society should not be abandoned for the sake of Moksha. Renunciation is not for all. It is only for a few. Malhotra calls our attention to a dilemma in the Indian situation. He says, "Indian mind had been under the strain of two opposite forces since the beginning of renaissance in India. The consciousness of the greatness of the Vedantic philosophy drives it towards the spiritual pursuits while the western civilisation, that assures freedom from poverty and squalor, sets before it ideals of material happiness. This situation sometimes produces discordant notes in our thinking. Idealism and realism pull the Indian mind to different directions."* Thus the Indian mind is pulled in one way by the traditional spiritual pursuit and in the other way by the western style material pursuit. Ultimately the Vedantic philosophy pushes the Indian people to the spiritual side whereas the western civilisation pushes them to the material side. But, in Vivekananda, we find that the two sides are reconciled in the interest of the individual and society.

Vivekananda upholds the Hindu view of socio-economic organisation. He advocates the Purusharthas, i.e., four-fold objects of life. They are Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha. He also upholds the Varnashrama Dharma, i.e., four-fold order of society.

* S.L. Malhotra, Social And Political Orientations of Neo-Vedantism (Delhi: S. Chand and Company, 1970), pp.64-65.
To him, Ashrama Dharma stands for individual liberty and growth. Varnashrama Dharma ensures material prosperity and social solidarity. The individual has to pass through Ashrama Dharma for the fulfilment of the central goals of his and society's life.

For Vivekananda the householder ship is an ideal scheme of human life because it depends upon Karmayoga and this is essential for the whole society. He is of the view that it is difficult to be a householder and carry out all the social, economic and spiritual obligations to society. The material pursuits are necessary to sustain and maintain the family, society and spiritual life. There is no clash between the pursuit of material life and the spiritual path. In fact, this process brings him nearer the spiritual goals of life. Vivekananda never pleaded or supported poverty for our people. He never glorified or deified poverty. The pursuit of the material goals is necessary for the interests of the common man and the welfare of the entire society.

Spiritual freedom presupposes material development. For Vivekananda matter and mind or spirit are one and the same reality. He preferred materialism to spiritualism whenever there was a conflict between the two. He said that he would not believe
in a God who does not give him bread in this world but who only promises bliss in the next world.* He always believed in what his master Ramakrishna Paramahamsa taught him, that religion was not for empty bellies. He said, "It is an insult to a starving people to offer them religion, it is an insult to a starving man to teach him metaphysics."** The worldly man, in order to take interest in spiritual life, should get exhausted with pleasures of life. Then he will realise the uselessness of the temporary material life. Then he will move in search of spiritual freedom. Thus Vivekananda wanted to establish a society on a synthesis of the material and spiritual life. This synthesis has been called dignified, sublimated materialism or realistic spiritualism.

** Spiritual Socialism

Vivekananda says, "I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread."***

He finds the doctrines of social unity and economic justice


enshrined in socialism. He was aware of the limitations of socialism. He never believed that it was a perfect system. He believed that socialism would be an important ideology in the decades to come. He made a prophetic remark that "Everything goes to show that socialism or some form of rule by the people, call it what you will, is coming on the boards."* Swamiji was thus a man of vision. He anticipated the arrival of socialism, both in the west and in the east. History has proved him right. Swami Vivekananda is perhaps the first Indian who called himself a socialist. He was a pioneer of the movement for the liberation of masses. His was a drive in favour of social justice, for justice meant the just ordering of things. Vivekananda wished to apply the Advaitic idea of unity in social life. He was of the opinion that socialism would establish a just society. It would remove inequalities by a spirit of love and social unity. His socialism believed in the theory of class cooperation and unity. He pleaded for getting back the original caste system for performing the socialistic functions of society. He anticipated just economy based on the self-interest of the individual which would lead to an equitable distribution of wealth. He identified the Shudra rule with socialism. Thus he tries to harmonise the

political ideologies of individualism and socialism. Individualism emphasises the superiority of the individual and his freedom. Socialism on the other hand emphasises the role of society and the economic equality of individuals. Practically, in every age men have faced the opposition between these two political ideals. Vivekananda tries to reconcile the genius of the individual and the demands of the community.

Vivekananda holds the view that institutions and ideals of society and politics are not eternal. In order to survive they have to adjust themselves to changing conditions. If the institutions are to become effective and creative a dynamic society on a spiritual basis has to be built. India, he says, has always held religion supreme over politics. His mission "is to show that religion is everything and in everything." He says that religion is not in books or in social rituals. Religion lies in the realisation of the spiritual oneness in social life. He bases his socialism on spiritual and social unity, freedom and equality. He noted that "Every improvement in India requires first of all an upheaval in religion. Before flooding India

with socialistic or political ideas first deluge the land with spiritual ideas."*

Vivekananda believes that the Vedantic concept of unity is necessary for his spiritual socialism. He says that Vedanta can furnish all the modern communistic or equalising theories with a spiritual basis. The aim of Vedanta and socialism is the same, to rescue the masses from social, political and economic exploitation and bondage. Because of his Vedanta Swamiji was a liberal in his heart and a socialist in his outlook. His idea of liberalism stands for individual freedom and dignity. His concept of socialism stands for just society. Both individualism and socialism are inadequate and limited. Individual freedom is useless without the socialist concept of economic equality. Liberalism is useless without any possibilities of growth. Socialism should be an expansion of liberalism. Thus he tries to reject the worst part of both socialism and individualism and combine the best parts of the two. He says, "The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried -- if for nothing else, for the novelty of the thing."**


He has compared and contrasted the difference between the western and Indian approaches to the problem of individual and society with a unique degree of clarity and observation. M.N.Jha observes, "What distinguished the life pattern in India from that of the west was the emphasis on the role as the hallmark of man under the former, while it was the totality of being that was recognised under the latter. As a result of the role basis for human relations in India, individuals as such disappear from social sight while they stay at the centre of the western civilisation. According to Vivekananda, it was the difference between the respective positions of the two civilisations that accounted for the greater susceptibility of western civilisation to the liberalist stimuli than its Indian counterpart."

Humanistic Advaitism

Vivekananda's aim as a humanist was to seek and promote human divinity and unity. The general belief of the humanist and the socialist is that there is unity and equality among human beings. The difference between a Marxist and a humanist is that the Marxist considers man only as a means to society while the

* M.N.Jha, Modern Indian Political Thought (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1975), pp.138-39.
humanist glorifies the human being as such. Vivekananda considers man as an end in himself and he further regards man as divine by nature. Vivekananda argues that "... each man should be treated not as what he manifests, but as what he stands for."

We may note in passing that M.N. Roy advocates new humanism. It is also called integral humanism. According to him, man and the universe are integrated in a law-governed and self-sufficient cosmic system. Roy says that new humanism "deduces a humanist social philosophy and positive (non-relative) ethics from a mechanistic cosmology and a materialist metaphysics (Physical Realism)."

Vivekananda's humanism is spiritualistic humanism. It may also be called humanistic Advaita. It advocates the identity of humanity with divinity. It defends the purity of human nature. It regards man as God. It challenges the social, religious and economic evils of society. It seeks faith and strength in the individual. His humanism is based on Advaita. This philosophy asserts the purity of human nature. Vivekananda holds


that human nature is pure, free and divine. All the strength, the good, power in human nature is the result of divinity. In his own words, "So, potentially, each one of us has that infinite ocean of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss as our birth right, our real nature; and difference between us is caused by the greater or lesser power to manifest that divine."* The purity of human nature makes man socially altruistic and ethical. Rationalism is the outcome of a free and equal society. Rationalism helps man to correct his errors and seeks liberation from all kinds of bonds and ignorance. It helps man to identify himself with society. Thus Vivekananda's purity of reason and purity of human nature are identical. Freedom and equality are meaningless where the relations of the individual and society are not based on rational thinking. So Vivekananda's concept of purity of human nature stands for a free, equal and rational society. The impurity of human nature and humanism are inconsistent with each other. Man becomes selfish and exploitative because of impure nature. The impurity of human nature regards inequality and bondage as natural. It considers life as a curse. It leads to fatalism. It deepens faith in the eternal dependence of man on man and man on authority. This dependence may be social,

political or religious. It limits human activity. It develops pessimism. It denies human growth and perfection. Vivekananda's presupposition of human purity heightens the place of man in society and universe. He holds that above and beyond man there is nothing in the world. Man and God are identical to him. His ideal of humanity and divinity are one and the same. He says, "Man is the highest being that exists, and this is the greatest world. We can have no conception of God — higher than man, so our God is man, and man is God."*

To humanism, man is the measure of all knowledge. He is the master of the universe. This rational outlook helps in the development of individual aloofness and self-centredness. This supremacy of man is to be balanced by a sense of social identity and love of human beings. Without human love and affection, rational humanism is incomplete and imperfect. Vivekananda holds that man is not only to be loved and served but also to be worshipped. Without the total emancipation of mankind individual liberation is selfish and narrow. He declares, "I believe in God, and I believe in man. I believe in helping the miserable. I believe in going even to hell to save others."** Vivekananda's

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humanism can be described thus in the words of Romain Rolland, "It was wonderful that he (Vivekananda) kept in his feverish hands to the end the equal balance between the two poles; a burning love of the Absolute (the Advaita) and the irresistible appeal of suffering humanity. And what makes him so appealing to us is that at those times when equilibrium was no longer possible, and he had to make a choice, it was the latter that won the day."*

Vivekananda found his God (Shiva) in the oppressed, tyrannised and exploited, the destitute and ignorant. Humanism of Vivekananda means that man is both an end as well as a means to serve humanity. To quote his words, "The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. Of course all animals are temples too, but man is the highest, the Taj Mahal of temples."** Man is everything for him. He is the subject and object. He is the means and the end. Man as an end shines in his own divine light. As a means he serves others to find divinity in them. In one of his talks, he says, "First, let us be Gods, and then help others to be Gods. 'Be and Make.' Let

this be our motto."* The duty of man as a finite being is to serve society. In brief, to Vivekananda, humanity is God. Social service is religion. Regarding Swamiji's view on humanism democracy and patriotism, Dr.Y.Chelysev says, "Though we do not agree with the idealistic basis of Vivekananda's humanism, we recognise that it possesses many features of active humanism manifested above all in a fervent desire to elevate man, to instil in him a sense of his own dignity, sense of responsibility for his own destiny and the destiny of all people, to make him strive for the ideals of good, truth and justice, to foster in man abhorrence for any suffering. The humanistic ideal of Vivekananda is to a certain degree identical with Gorky's Man with a capital letter."** This New-Vedanta may be called humanistic Advaitism.

Vivekananda sets a high value on universal religion. The heart of universal religion is the belief that God manifests himself through all living beings. Vivekananda gave a call to the Indian people to work for the good of humanity. Besides individual perfection, he always asked people to find God in their fellow men. He used to say, "If you want to find God

** R.C.Majumdar (editor), Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume (Calcutta: Swami Vivekananda Centenary Committee, 1963), pp.508-09.
serve man." He expressed his desire to be born again and suffer thousands of miseries so that he could worship the only God, the sum total of all souls. Vivekananda believed in a practical religion. He used to ask people to worship and offer the poor what they were offering to God in the temple. He had a very sensitive heart. He burst into tears when he once heard a story of the poverty of people. He found God in the worship and the work for the poor. He called God Daridra Narayana (God of the poor). He says, "It is only by doing good to others that one attains one's own good, and it is by leading others to Bhakti and Mukti that one attains them oneself." Swamiji established the Ramakrishna Mission and encouraged his disciples to move from village to village and serve the poor. He did not believe in the ceremonial practice of religion. He called it sheer madness. To him serving others was the only religion. His humanism is based on that religion which is devoted to the service of mankind and renunciation for service. His great emphasis on love and service reminds us of the Buddha or Basava who also asked his followers to move from place to place, serving the poor and the needy.


Swami Vivekananda's ideas on nationalism and internationalism occupy a significant place in his political thought. He was a patriot of patriots. His love for India knew no bounds. His frequent and long journeys throughout India brought him very close to the masses of the country. His unique decision on the rock aimed at building India with foreign help and assistance. His journeys in the country enabled him to have a firm understanding of the plight of the Indian people. His mind was caught between the India of the past and that of the present. His heart pained and his eyes burst into tears. He made it his sole aim to free people from their material degradation and enable them to regain their spiritual supremacy. This was his life's mission. According to Sri Aurobindo, Vivekananda was a powerful exponent of the theory of "preservation by reconstruction." Swami Vivekananda tried to reconcile the thesis represented by anglican or anglicised reformists and the antithesis represented by the reactionary orthodox Hindus. He tried to avoid a clash between the reformers speaking for the western culture and the reformers who were blinded by their own past. We see in his Vedanta a fusion of the eastern and western approaches to build a new India. In the process of building a new India, one was not be too rigid.

One was to be flexible. Vivekananda desired the growth of India but not at the cost of national individuality. Advising his countrymen, he said, "Stand on your own feet, and assimilate what you can; learn from every nation, take what is of use to you. But remember that as Hindus everything else must be subordinated to our own national ideals."*

**Spiritual Nationalism**

Vivekananda was not a politician but his personality and philosophy made a great impact on India's national life. He inspired the cause of national liberty and reconstruction. He was hailed as a father of Indian nationalism. Subhash Chandra Bose said that Swami Vivekananda's personality was rich and profound and it was this personality, as distinct from his teachings and writings, which accounts for the great influence the exerted on his countrymen. Vivekananda helped to lay the foundation of freedom movement in India. He gave spiritual inspiration to the nationalist movement. His aim was to rejuvenate the Hindu religion and awaken the spiritual consciousness

of the world through the strength of his Neo-Vedanta. Swamiji was not a blind reviver of the Indian past. Swamiji is right when he says that each nation has a mission and a message of its own. "Just as there is an individuality in every man, so there is a national individuality — each nation has a destiny to deliver, each nation has a mission to accomplish."* These words of Vivekananda suggest that he was far ahead of his times. He pleaded for retaining the uniqueness of each nation and at the same time imbibing the best of the other nations. To him the pursuit of spiritualism was a unique feature of India's way of life. Vivekananda differed from some of the patriotic spokesmen who held the view that religion should not be a directing principle of a nation. But Swamiji did not agree with this view. He held the opinion that India's destiny and religion were bound up with each other. His mission in life was to revise the eternal teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads. India, in order to regain her spirituality, must retain the best in her past. Only her independence would be meaningful. Her religion and freedom always went together. Freedom and fearlessness were the message of the Upanishads. The Upanishads were the source of spiritual strength. The way to become dynamic and strong meant cultivation of faith in the Vedanta.

Swami Vivekananda refers back to the Indian heritage in order to create zeal in the passive nation. It was necessary to arouse national pride. He said, "Nowadays everybody blames those who constantly look back to their past. It is said that so much looking back to the past is the cause of all India's woes. To me, on the contrary, it seems that the opposite is true. So long as they forgot the past, the Hindu nation remained in a state of stupor; and as soon as they have begun to look into their past, there is on every side a fresh manifestation of life."* The Gita, to him, was a source of strength. To Swami Vivekananda, nationality was not merely political. It was not having powers and rights. It was a sacred ideal. Its main aim was to express the ideal manhood. The political significance of nationality was not to be underestimated. But his stress was on unity, based on heart and spirit rather than mind.

He disliked and criticised the Indians who imitated the western social and religious institutions. He was always against meaningless imitation. He was no doubt aware of the many defects in the Indian social system. He wanted them to be rectified but he was not ready to throw off the age-old Indian system. He was

not ready to borrow wholesale any new system, including that of the west. He said, "A child of but yesterday, destined to die the day after tomorrow, comes to me and asks me to change all my plans; and if I hear the advice of that baby and change all my surroundings according to his ideas, I myself should be a fool. ... Much of the advice that is coming to us from different countries is similar to this. Tell these wiseacres: 'I will hear you when you have made a stable society yourselves. You cannot hold on to one idea for two days, you quarrel and fail; you are born like moths in the spring and die like them in five minutes. You come up like bubbles and burst like bubbles too. First form a stable society like ours. First make laws and institutions that remain undiminished in their power through scores of centuries. Then will be the time to talk on the subject with you, but till then, my friend, you are only a ... child'."

Thus he held in great respect India's culture and ideas and ideals. They were incomparable. They had been developed through thousands of years of trial and experimentation. They thus had attained the highest standard ever reached by humanity. They possessed unshakable strength and stability. Swamiji even went to the extent of praising the poverty of India. He maintains that India was clean,

poverty was honoured in the land where religion was understood to be renunciation. Here poverty was not necessarily associated with the vice as it had so often been in the west. To the Swamiji, all India was sacred and wonderful.

This does not mean that he was not conscious of the merits of the western ideals. He desired India to retain her feet firmly on the ground and learn useful things from other nations. He was for the combination of the best of the west and the east. His ideal lay in the fusion of materialism and spiritualism. He held that action and contemplation should go hand in hand. So he said, "We talk foolishly against material civilisation. The grapes are sour. Even taking all that foolishness for granted, in all India there are, say, a hundred thousand really spiritual men and women. Now, for the spiritualisation of these, must three hundred million be sunk in savagery and starvation? Why should any starve? How was it possible for the Hindus to have been conquered by the Mohammedans? It was due to the Hindus' ignorance of material civilisation — material civilisation, nay, even luxury, is necessary to create work for the poor. Bread! Bread! I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven! Pooh! India is to be raised, the poor are to be fed, education is to be spread, and the evil of priestcraft is to be removed. No priestcraft, no social
tyranny! More bread, more opportunity for everybody! Our young fools organise meetings to get more power from the English. They only laugh. None deserves liberty who is not ready to give liberty."*

Swami Vivekananda had anticipated the degeneration of India. He had pointed out that the danger of the rejection of India's spiritual culture might come from three quarters. First, the land could be converted to an exotic religion. Second, the lower castes could create a different religion. Third, a totally non-religious group could arise and threaten the land. He said that Christianity failed as Islam had failed in the olden days. The second danger seemed to have passed. The third danger of materialistic, secular, democracy and extremely anti-spiritual dialectical materialism still continued. Vivekananda was naturally anxious to retain the spiritual values of the practice of Karma Yoga which advocated detached unselfish action on the part of workers. It would enable them to practise enlightened self-interest as against gross selfishness. Thus Swamiji visualised rebuilding India by a genuine spiritualisation of her past culture, taking in freely the best part of the western culture and civilisation.

Vivekananda was not an ordinary patriot who loved his country without caring for the welfare of other nations. His spiritual nationalism went beyond the boundaries of particular nations. It embraced all human beings irrespective of nations and races. His nationalism recognised no barriers of caste, creed, religion, class, sex, sect etc. His ideas on internationalism are similarly comprehensive. They are broad and all inclusive. He thought of the universe as one and all people in the world as one humanity. His ideas on internationalism anticipated the birth of the UNO years before it came into existence. He believed in one universe, one world, one government, one humanity. He advocated a world without borders or frontiers, as some idealists are advocating today. For him nations in the world were interdependent. Each nation, in order to seek its growth, needs the aid and assistance of other nations. Each nation, in order to make progress, should exchange its of science and religion with other nations. Vivekananda advocated union of nations on spiritual grounds. In order to realise the universal oneness, they had to exchange and share their cultural, spiritual and scientific knowledge. Vivekananda's nationalism "was not
nationalism in the smaller sense, it was a kind of super-nationalism, a kind of internationalism sublimated.*

His outlook on internationalism was based on three postulates:

1. The existence of national diversities.
2. Fostering mutual context and exchange of knowledge.
3. Asserting India's spiritual leadership of the world.

Three factors govern his ideas on internationalism: his experience of life in the west, his awareness of India's degradation and his Vedanta philosophy. He was aware that India's slavery and backwardness were due to the narrow and exclusive outlook of the Indians. Their false sense of superiority of their culture and civilisation was another cause of the degradation. Swamiji condemned the Indian attitude of looking at others as Mlechchas and unequals. Their refusal to share their knowledge with others was at the root of their narrow nationalism. Vivekananda pointed out, "India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word MLECHCHA and stopped from

* R.C. Majumdar (editor), Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume (Calcutta: Swami Vivekananda Centenary Committee, 1963), p. 536.
communion with others."* He condemned the caste taboos which prevented the great thinkers from going abroad. The caste system thus retarded the growth of India. Swamiji has thanked Britain for making Indians active and broad minded. He praised Raja Ram Mohan Roy for overcoming India's exclusiveness. So India should keep its doors open for exchange of ideas with other nations. Indians should go abroad and should widen their mental horizons. National growth and international understanding were the topics to which Vivekananda refers again and again in his writings and speeches. According to Romain Rolland, Vivekananda's "prolonged contact with the west made him feel more deeply the personality of India. And in contrast, this made him value the strong and multiple personality of the west. Both seemed to him equally necessary, for they were complementary, awaiting the world to unite them, the common Gospel, and it was he who was in open the path to union."**

He anticipated that the unity of the world would be a fact even on material and spiritual grounds. He says, "To my science mind, if modern/is proving anything again and again, it is

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this, that we are one — mentally, spiritually and physically."

The modern technology has been conquering space and time. The world is moving towards universal unity. He pointed out that "The old lines of demarcation and differentiation are vanishing rapidly. Electricity and steam-power are placing the different parts of the world in inter-communication with each other."**

His Vedanta strengthens his concept of international unity. Vedanta which fosters love and universal oneness helps to establish universal brotherhood among nations. On the basis of his Vedanta, he views all nations as equal. He says, "That, between two nations, one is superior and the other inferior, has no meaning whatsoever."**

*** His Vedanta holds that all nations belong to the universe. They are parts of the universal existence which is Brahman. He explains, "Each individual is like a bubble, and the nations resemble many bubbles. Gradually these nations are joining, and I am sure the day will come when separation will vanish and that oneness to which we are all going will become manifest."****

We may say that the present developments in the


world, the relations among nations, are such that the forecast of Swami Vivekananda seems to be assuming a practical shape.

Unity in Diversity

Vivekananda is not for wiping out the uniqueness of the various nations. He says that each nation should retain its uniqueness and, nations, in order to grow and make progress, should share with one another their distinctive contributions. His internationalism is to be developed on the independence and individuality of each nation. "Each race has a part to play in this divine harmony of nations. Each race has its mission to perform, its duty to fulfil. The sum total is the great harmony."* National development requires some isolation for each nation from other nations. Each nation has to expand its individuality into universality. Countries should broaden their outlook. They should get rid of their national weaknesses like pride and prejudice. Their outlook must be developed on the lines of national self-restraint and self-respect. He is of the opinion that the entire social fabric is based upon the idea of self-

discipline. He says, "Each nation must give in order to live."* Mutual love and trust will enable each nation to expand and enrich. Each nation should develop towards internationalism by observing restraint. The concept of universal oneness would lead them to join an international organisation. He argues that individual freedom is not a threat to society, nor national freedom a threat to the spirit of internationalism. Internationalism is to be based on a loose collection of states. Each state should contribute according to its capacity to maintenance of international harmony and growth and development of friendly relations among the various peoples.

International understanding should encourage a sharing of national values. Swamiji approached America and other nations with the spirit of brotherhood and an open mind. He had all appreciation for the social organisation of the west which was based upon liberty. He desired India to become an equal with the west by sharing her spiritual knowledge with the west.

"Vivekananda ... led India into the current of world cultural forces."

Swami Vivekananda was aware of the weaknesses of the western society. To him, it (western society) was based on a sandy foundation. The western world was, "Half killed and degraded by political ambitions and social scheming."* He criticised the western society for its being completely merged in the world Mammon, the god of greed. Religion had been given up. The western society did not live up to the teachings of Christ. He told the westerners to go back to Christ. He said, "Yours is a religion preached in the name of luxury. What an irony of fate! Reverse this if you want to live, reverse this."** He maintained that if the west was to be saved, it had to follow the religion of the Upanishads.

The Only Solace to Humanity

He desired to establish international relationship among the various nations on the basis of a feeling of oneness and spiritualism. He said, "The whole universe is one existence. There cannot be anything else. Out of diversities we are all

going towards this universal existence. Families into tribes, tribes into races, races into nations, nations into humanity ... how many wills going to the one! it is all knowledge, all science -- the realisation of this unity."* He strongly believed that the spiritual unity of mankind was possible by an adoption of the Indian spiritual approach. India's foreign policy was to preach the truths of India's Shastras to the nations of the world. The mission of India was to lead the countries of the world to a spiritual harmony and unity. He felt that India was "fated by Divine Providence to play the spiritual note in this harmony of nations."** "Once more the world must be conquered by India. This is the dream of my life."*** If India failed to do this, humanity would perish. All spiritualism would disappear from the world and there would be everywhere lust and luxury; force and fraud would be abundant. Mankind would lose its soul and peace. Vedanta was the basis for the harmony and spiritual unity of nations. Vedanta stood for a universal outlook. It was a universal religion. Vedanta would solve the various national and

international problems. He said, "My message in life is to
ask the east and the west not to quarrel over different ideals,
but to show them that the goal is the same in both cases, however
opposite it may appear."*

* Vivekananda, The Complete Works (Vol.IV; eleventh edition;