CHAPTER - 5
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA’S VISION
OF NEW INDIA

As a preacher of universal religion Vivekananda is well renowned both in the East and West. To the common man, he is first and foremost an advocate of Vedanta. However it is an erroneous view. He cannot be exclusively considered as a religious prophet. Swamiji was a preformer, a patriot, a philosopher, a religious preacher who awakened the people of India from its age old slumber and infused into it a new life and new blood. He was not only endowed with mystic consciousness like Plotinus and Spinoza but was also a real intellectual fully abreast of metaphysical Vedantism.

At the time India was suffering with the pain of industrialization and modernization which was totally bringing the change in the religious cultural social political and educational system India, the country which was rich and famous for her spiritual cultural aspects was losing her political economical, educational religious and social aspects at the time.

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL DIMENSIONS
A BACKGROUND STUDY

Of all the historical forces that went into the making of modern India, the most important one was the contact with the Western civilization. The roots of this cultural contact may be traced back to the end of the fifteenth century when European traders began to sail to the East attracted by the fabled wealth of 'the Indies'. The Portuguese led the way. The Dutch, the English and the French followed them one after another. India seeking the favour of the Mughal rulers rather than challenging their authority. However, trade interests soon developed into desire for political reasons.
The European companies were originally peaceful trading bodies in control. When the fighting and diplomatic maneuvering were over, the Europeans except the British, had virtually been driven from the Country. In the process the British gained a territorial foothold in Bengal, from where they would stride victory across India. The British rule in India had profound and pronounced effect, not only on political conditions of India, but also on social, religious, economic and cultural conditions. The darkness and gloom prevailing the national scenario sometimes showed the ray of light of reform movements. At the time when the imposition of foreign domination and the drafting of foreign culture had produced a pernicious effect on Indian life and Indian thought; single minded earnestness and devotion of the ancient times was adrift and everything was at the mercy of every wind and wave outside India. Indian mind made heroic attempt to fulfill the needs and meet the challenge of the time. In the midst of the depressing surroundings was the quite and scarcely noticed emergence of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. He drew around him a small band of earnest young men to train them for the task of uplift of society. Among the young lads and men attracted by the magnetic personality of the Paramahamsa, Vivekananda shone out most brilliantly.

In the paragraphs to follow, a brief account of the contemporary socio-religious and cultural scenario of the Country is presented to serve as the background for understanding Swami Vivekananda's philosophy and educational thoughts.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Towards the end of eighteenth century, India became the great field of conflict. Pt. Jawahar Lai Nehru was of the view that

"The British were not only better equipped fighters and better organizers, but were also far cleverer than their local rivals, and took every advantage of their mutual rivalries. So inevitably the British power spread and their rivals were knocked down one by one, and often with the help of others whose turn to go down came next."
The principal Indian contestants were the Marathas, the Nizam of Hyderabad and Haider Ali, the ruler of Mysore. As the fortunes of war ebbed and flowed, alliances were freely made and broken. Gradually, they were conquered including many other states such as Sindh, Satara, Nagpur, Jhansi, Avadh etc. The Governor Generals' oppressive policies created much ill feeling in Indian rulers and discontent swelled. Commenting on the British motivation for political expansion Annie Besant stated:

"Quite frankly it was the immense wealth of India that lured them, wealth to be carried "home" for enjoyment; the "white mans burden" was golden."

She further added

"The company made treatise and broke them or forged them, if more convenient; it cheated, robbed, murdered, oppressed and built an empire in about a century."

The extension of political power, economic exploitation, interfering with social and religious customs, contempt towards Indian created dissatisfaction and distrust among both the Indian elite and the masses. According to Sir Valentine Chirol, Lord Canning was moved to utter some strangely prophetic words before he left England that he wished for a peaceful term of office, but he could not forget that in the sky of India, serene as it was, a small cloud might arise, no longer than a man's hand, but which growing larger and larger might at last threaten to burst and overwhelm with ruin. Sir Valentine Chirol remarked that

"Within less than a year the cloud arose and burst and he had to face the outbreak of the Mutiny and see all the foundation of co-operation between Indians and British rudely shaken."

The revolt broke out in Meerut on 10 May, 1857 and spread like wild fire across northern India. Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Bareilly, Jhansi, Ara became the main centres. The rebels conducted themselves valiantly but the tide soon turned against them. Though the revolt was suppressed, it brought about significant changes in the character of Indian Administration. On August 2, 1858, the British Parliament
passed the Government of India Act, transferring all rights, that the company had hitherto enjoyed on Indian soil, directly to the crown. Queen Victoria proclamation of November 1, 1858

"declared that the government of India had been assumed by the Queen; the Lord Canning was the first viceroy; that all officers who had been in the service of the East India Company were confirmed in their offices; that all treaties made by the Company with native princes to be maintained; that the Queen desired no extension of territory; that she promised full religious toleration to her Indian subjects, would always respect their ancient usages; that she offered pardon to all rebels who had not directly taken part in the murder of Europeans; and that she would always labour for the prosperity of her newly acquired dominions."5

About the proclamation G.B. Malleson remarked: -

"The proclamation of the Queen was, in very deed, the end and the beginning - the end of a conflict which had deluged the country with blood, the beginning of an era, full of hope, alike for the loyal and the misguided, for the prince and the peasants, for the owner and for the cultivator, for every class and for every creed."6

In reality, these high hopes could not bear fruits. The pattern of British colonialism broadly remained the same before and after the revolt of 1857. The permanent occupation of India and economic exploitation remained the primary objectives of the British, even after the revolt. The proclamation simply meant changes in the means to achieve these ends.

The pattern of organization of the Indian army, which was the strongest pillar of the British rule in India, was changed. Firstly, the proportion of the British soldiers was increased and they were equipped with the best arms. Secondly, the policy of counterpoise of natives was to be pursued in case of the army as well. Therefore the Indians were divided into martial and non martial races and regiments were raised on caste, religion or regional basis, viz. the Sikh regiment, the Jat regiment, the Gurkha regiment etc.
The second pillar of the Imperial strength was the monopoly of the higher services by the Englishmen. The Indian Civil Service Act of 1861, no doubt provided for an annual competitive examination for recruitment to the civil service. But the venue of examination was kept in London. Besides the detailed rules concerning it were so framed that the Indians were virtually kept away from the services.

After 1858, British continued to follow the policy of "divide and rule" by turning the princes against the people, province against the province, caste against the caste, group against the group, and above all Hindus against Muslims. The unity displayed by Hindus and Muslims during the 1857 revolt had disturbed the foreign rulers. They were determined to break this unity so as to weaken the rising nationalist movement. Immediately after the revolt they suppressed Muslims, confiscated their lands and property on a large scale and declared Hindus to be their favourites. After 1870, this policy was reversed and an attempt was made to turn upper class and middle class Muslims against the nationalist movement.

Because of industrial and commercial backwardness and the near absence of social service, the educated Indians depended almost entirely on government services. This led to keen competition for government posts. The government utilized this competition to fan provincial and communal rivalry and hatred and they succeeded in it. It is apparent by the observation of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

"Even a superficial observer cannot fail to notice that a spirit of aggression underlies the Hindu attitude towards the Muslim and the Muslim attitude towards the Hindu. "

The British turned for friendship to the most reactionary group of Indians — the princes, the zamindars and the landlords. The change of policy towards the princes was to use them as a dam against the rise of popular and nationalist movement. As the press was helping in the rise of nationalism, the British attempted to crush it altogether.
Though the British introduced the modern concepts of 'rule of law' and 'equality before law' in legal system, in practice, the beaurocracy and the police enjoyed arbitrary powers and interfered with the rights and liberties of the people. The Europeans and their descendants had separate courts and even laws. So miscarriage of justice occurred frequently, justice became expensive; rich could easily twist the laws and courts to work in their own favour. The complicated laws were beyond the grasp of the illiterate and ignorant peasants. Moreover, the widespread prevalence of corruption in police and the rest of the administrative machinery led to the denial of justice.

When the national scenario was gloomy, the Englishmen were involved in self-boasting. For example, George Wheeler wrote in 1876,

"The contended state of India is evidence that the boughs of the tree of England's greatness are not too weighted and do not threaten to make her anxious, let alone uproot her."\(^8\)

He further stated

"At this time of contentment and good government the Prince of Wales make a triumphal passage through the land. The whole face of the country is illumined with joyfulness".\(^9\)

However, the enlightened Indians were not blind to the real situation. So they made attempts for nationalist organizations. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his supporters were the pioneers of Indian nationalism.

They stood up for democratic rights such as the freedom of press and put forth demands like the right of the nation to have a voice in the administration of the country.

The growth of national sentiment was accompanied by the social and political organizations. 'The Bengal British India Society' was the first political association organized by the Indians to fight constitutionally for their rights. Gradually, many other
organizations sprang up such as 'British India Association' (1851), 'Bombay Association' (1852). Of the new organizations formed in the 1860's and 1870's, the Bombay branch of the 'East India Association' of London, the 'Sarvajanic Sabha' of Poona and the 'India Association' founded at Calcutta were the most important. These organizations intensified the need of the formation of a common organization. Finally, in 1885 A.O. Hume, a retired British Officer, formed the 'Indian National Congress'.

Swami Vivekananda was well aware of the people who in the name of politics rob others and fatten themselves by sucking the very life blood of the masses. As he puts it.

"That shocking sight behind the scene of acting of these politicians — that rivalry of bribery, that robbery in broad day light, that dance of the devil in man, which are practiced on such occasions - you would be hopeless about man."

Swami Vivekananda emphasized on the principles of self-government because a man cannot work wholeheartedly unless he has not a share in the work and a voice in the management. His fiery speeches and writings shook the hearts of the Indians and guided them to the national movement.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The economic conditions of the Nineteenth century was very painful. There was a sudden and quick collapse of the handicrafts which had, for centuries, made India's name a byword in the markets of the entire civilized world. Indian goods made with primitive techniques could not compete with goods produced on mass scale by powerful steam-operated machines. The ruin of Indian industries, particularly rural artisan industries, proceeded even more rapidly. Once the railways were built and the armor of the isolated, self-sufficient villages was pierced, the cotton weaving and spinning industries were the worst hit. Silk and woolen textiles were in no better condition. Similar fate overtook the iron, pottery, glass, paper, metals, shipping and dyeing industries.
The gradual disappearance of Indian rulers and their courts who were the main customers of town handicrafts also gave a big blow to these industries. Moreover, Indian rulers and nobles were replaced as the ruling class by British officials and military officers who patronised their own home-products almost exclusively. Cities that had withstood the ravages of war and plunder failed to survive the British conquest. Dacca, Surat, Murshidabad and many other populous and flourishing industrial centres were depopulated and laid waste. India became an agricultural colony of manufacturing Britain who needed it as a source of raw material for its industries. Nowhere was the change more glaring than in the cotton textiles industry. While India had been for centuries the largest exporter of cotton goods in the world, it was now transformed into an importer of British cotton products and an exporter of raw cotton, Sri Jawahar Lai Nehru also confirmed the fact

"So India which had been for hundred of years 'the Lancashire of the Eastern World' and had in the eighteenth Century supplied cotton goods on a vast scale to Europe lost her position as a manufacturing country, and became just a consumer of British goods. The machine did not come to India, as it might have done in the ordinary course, but machine made goods came from outside. The current which was flowing from India, bearing Indian goods to foreign countries, and bringing gold and silver, was reversed. Henceforth foreign goods came to India and gold and silver went out of it."

During the period from 1800-1850 there was in force an elaborate network and merchantilist provisions designed to aid British textiles and bring money into the British treasury and also having the effect of paralysing Indian textiles in British markets, in foreign markets and even in Indian markets. Where the modern cotton mill industry developed entirely as a result of Indian entrepreneurial ability, the Indian government levied an excise duty of 5% on that industry on the insistence of British textile interests in Great Britain to offset any advantage that it could get from the import duty on cotton goods and yarns. Not only that cotton textile industry was given a death blow by English rulers, every other industry fell a prey to their ruinous policies. The industrial and commercial policies of the British in India aimed at developing India as a market
for British manufacturing goods in return for Indian goods and raw material. In the words of Pt. Nehru

"India became a great source for raw material which were sent to the factories of England, and a market for British manufactured goods. This was done at the expense of India's progress and economic development. "

By 1895 the decline of the Indian industry had reached such a the peasant was also progressively impoverished under British rule. In spite of the fact that he was now free of internal wars, his material conditions deteriorated and he steadily sank into poverty. In the very beginning of British rule in Bengal, the policy of Clive and Warren Hastings of extracting the largest possible land-revenue, had led to devastation. To quote Nehru

"The East India Company and its officers were terribly greedy. As I have told you, they emptied the treasury of Bengal and laid violent hands on money wherever they could find it. They tried to squeeze Bengal and Bihar and extract the maximum of land revenue. "

In both, the temporarily and permanently settled zamindari areas, the lot of the peasants remained inevitable. The process of taxation and growing poverty pushed the cultivators into debt which in turn increased their poverty.

The growing commercialization of agriculture also helped the money-lender-cum merchant to exploit the cultivator. The poor peasant was forced to sell his produce just after the harvest and at whatever price he could. The loss of land and the overcrowding of land caused by de-industrialization and lack of modern industry compelled the landless peasants and ruined artisans and handicraftsmen to become either tenants of the money-lenders and zamindars or agricultural labourers at starvation wages.
The heaviness of land revenue and the rigid law of collection under which the zamindari estates were ruthlessly sold in case of delay in payment of revenue worked havoc for old zamindars. By a chain process a large number of rents receiving intermediaries between the actual cultivator and the government sprang up. In some cases in Bengal their number went as high as fifty. The condition of the helpless cultivating tenants who had, ultimately, to bear the unbearable burden of maintaining this horde of superior landlords was precarious beyond imagination.

J.L. Nehru highlights another important factor of impoverishment of India with following words

"Wars for the benefit of England were carried on at the expense of India. The British people practiced with great success the method of making the people of India pay for their own conquest. The Indian people also paid with blood and treasure for the conquest of neighboring people with whom they had no quarrel the Burmese and Afghans. The wars impoverished India to some extent."

Dadabhai Naoroji, a distinguished Indian economist, in his classic paper on the poverty of India (1876) emphasized that the drain of wealth and capital from the country which started after 1757 was responsible for the absence of development in India. He described the drain of wealth as the evil of all evils and maintained that Britain was bleeding India white. The drain was so obvious and even the British officials accepted the fact. John Sullivan, President of the Board of Revenue, Madras, said that

"Our system acts very much like a sponge, drawing up all the good things from the banks of the Ganges and squeezing them down on the banks of the Thames."

The policies of the British on the one hand, disrupted the traditional economy of India and on the other hand, failed to develop a modern economic structure. The Indian economy, therefore, remained neither traditional nor modern and thus India lost the
advantage of both Occurrence of famine during the British rule in which lakhs of lives were always lost, proved that poverty and starvation had taken deep roots in India.

There is no disagreement on the fact among the historians that throughout the period of British rule most Indians always lived on the verge of starvation. As time passed, they found it more and more difficult to find employment or a living.

Swami Vivekananda was much moved by the economic plight of the country. He wanted his countrymen to open the eyes and see what a piteous cry for food is rising in the land of Bharat-proverbial for its wealth:

"this fertile country with abundance water-supply, where nature produces wealth and harvest a thousand times more than the others, you have no food for your stomach, no clothes to cover your body! In this country of abundance, the produce of which has been the cause of the spread of civilization in other countries, you are reduced to such straits! Your condition is even worse than that of a dog. And you glory in your Vedas and Vedanta."16

Vivekananda warned that more increase in per capita income or GNP will not help the people at large if a handful of them enjoy the wealth. So the economic plan should be aimed at the development of the lower strata of the people. He exorted his countrymen to help themselves:

"Remember that the nation lives in the cottage ... the fate of a nation depends upon the condition of the masses. Can you raise them?... This is to be done and we will do it"17

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS

Like the social system the religion also underwent the process of reformation during the nineteenth century.
In the beginning the English refrained from interfering with the religious practices of India. The example of the Portuguese, who became unpopular on account of forcible conversion of the Indians to Christianity proved to be an eye-opener to the British. The English Company, therefore, prevented the entry of Christian missionaries in India.

In the nineteenth century, conditions changed and once the English felt that their position in India was politically secure they made inroads, in the religious fields as well and encouraged the Christian missionaries in their religious propaganda. These missionaries settled in India and began their work in an organized manner. The field of education provided these missionaries with a golden opportunity to propagate their religion. The Charter Act of 1833 relaxed all the restrictions on the entry of any mission and its activities in India. This had opened the flood gates. Christian missionaries and Englishmen regarded India's religious condition to be very inferior to that of their own. According to George Wheeler

"In India there are nearly a hundred millions of people who still kneel down before trees and stones. There are thousands of ignorant, abject men, who, under the pretext of being holy, parade the streets naked, with their bodies painted., their hair unkept, and their whole appearance that of the wildest and dirtiest savages. There are filthy yards surrounding temples in every city, where sacred cows and men wallow in the same mire, and from whence exhalations polluting the whole town proceed."

In order to raise Indians from the so-called uncivilized condition they gradually injected principles of Christianity in the minds of the Indian people. The educational institutions were made safe and sure ground for preaching Christianity. The missionaries were able to successfully propagate Christianity exploiting the abuses of casteism and untouchability that prevailed in the Hindu society. Ignorance among the Indian people was a blessing to the Christian missionaries and they selected the tribal and very backward areas for their religious propaganda and earned a good number of followers. The doctrines of Christianity were taught in the prisons and infused in the
hospitals. Orphanages became the centres of conversion. They went a step further in encouraging conversion by passing a law by which the Christian converts were given the right of inheritance of property of their Hindu parents.

The social and religious reform movements of the nineteenth century seriously checked the activities of the missionaries especially among Hindus and Muslims. Though their task went on unhampered in the tribal and backward areas.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was rightly called by Nicol Macnicol

"the herald of a new age"\(^{19}\)

He started the 'Atmiya Sabha' in 1815. It held weekly meetings for propagating the monotheistic doctrines of the Hindu scriptures. In 1828 he founded a new religious society called the 'Brahma Sabha' later known as 'Brahma Samaj' meaning one God society. The chief objects of 'Brahma Sabha' were purification of Hinduism and spreading the idea of monotheism. The new society was based on reason as well as the Vedas and Upanishads. It also incorporated the teachings of other religions. About the significance of Brahma Samaj, H.C.E. Zacharias wrote

"Ram Mohan Roy and his Brahma Samaj form the starting point for all the various reform movements - whether in Hindu religion, society or politics, which have agitated modern India."\(^{20}\)

Unfortunately, the 'Brahma Samaj' itself after the death of its founder, developed an unfortunate tendency to split into ever more and more sections and cliques.

The next major reform movement was led by Dayananda Saraswati. He founded 'Arya Samaj' in 1875 to reorganize the society on the model of the Vedas. He succeeded in setting up the dogma of Vedic infallibility against the Christian or Islamic dogma of supernatural revelation. He started the Suddhi movement, i.e. the conversion of non-Hindus to Hinduism. He successfully attacked evils of Hindu religion and society but
his emphasis on the Vedas and the strong belief in their infallibility gave his teachings an orthodox colouring.

The Theosophical society founded by Madame Blavatski & Col. Olcott in 1875 in U.S.A. and in 1886 at Adyar in Madras also aimed at establishing the universal brotherhood of humanity. Annie Besant, who joined it in 1889 gave new interpretation to the Hindu philosophy and regarded the ancient Hindu philosophy as the essence of world philosophy.

The religious reform movement involved not only Hindus, but also to some extent, Muslims & Parsis.

The reform movement among Muslims was initiated by Sayyid Ahmad of Rai Bareilly in the early part of the nineteenth century. Though he was killed in 1831, had done enough to focus the attention of Indian Muslims on their debased conditions. Another important movement was Aligarh movement founded by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

Religious reform among the Parsis of Bombay was begun in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1851 the 'Rahnumai Bhajdayasan Sabha' or 'Religious Reform Association' was started by Naoroji Furdonji, Dadabhai Naoroji, S.S. Banerjee and others.

One important feature of the religious-reform movement of period was that their programme was not restricted to the task of merely reforming religion, but extended to that of the reconstruction of social institutions and social relations. This was due to the fact that in India religion and social structure were organically interwoven. Caste hierarchy, sex inequality, untouchability and social taboos flourished because of the sanction of religion.
The contemporary religious conditions had profound influence on Vivekananda's mind. Instead of indulging in the conflict of worshipping one God or the other, he said that the object of worship should be the wicked, the miserable, the poor. He felt that the need of the time was to carry out the Advaita Vedanta system into practice. According to him, the whole of religion is to be pure and unselfish.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS

The British considered themselves racially superior and culturally more advanced. More than half a century after the establishment of British rule in Bengal, an eminent Governor-General the Marquess of Hastings (1813-23) observed

"The Hindu appears a being nearly limited to a mere animal functions ... with no higher intellect than a dog and an elephant or a monkey."\(^{21}\)

Such a view was, by no means confined to statesmen and politicians of Britain. Even James Mill, a famous writer of history, wrote

"the abject conditions in which the English found them in the eighteenth century represents their normal condition throughout their history."\(^{22}\)

Mill further observed that the

"Hindu excels in the qualities of a stave ... in the still more important qualities which constitute what we call the moral character, the Hindu ranks very low."\(^{23}\)

Such views produced diverse reactions. Some English educated Bengali Youth (known as Derozios) developed a revulsion against Hindu religion and culture, gave up old religious ideas and traditions and deliberately adopted practices most offensive to Hindu sentiments, such as drinking wine and eating beef. More mature minds denied the superiority of Western culture and prevented India from becoming a colourless copy of Europe; they drew inspiration from India's past heritage and reinterpreted it in the light of modern rationalism.
The British government wanted to economies the cost of administration by getting the cheap supply of educated Indians to the large number of subordinate posts in administration and British business enterprises. So government made efforts to impose Western teaching through English medium. Attempts in this direction were made by Christian missionaries. The main factor which tipped the scale in favour of English language and Western literature was economic factor. Indians wanted a system of education which could help them to earn their livelihood. Progressive Indian elements also favoured the spread of English education and Western learning. Raja Rammohan Roy protested against the government's proposal to strengthen the Calcutta, Madras and Benares Sanskrit Colleges and establishment of more oriental colleges in Bengal.

Soon within the General Committee of public instruction two groups were formed the Orientalists led by H.T. Prisep, who advocated the policy of giving encouragement to Oriental literature and the Anglicist, or the English party which favoured the adoption of English as a medium of instruction. Macaulay, a member of the executive council, favoured the viewpoint of the Anglicist party. He showed great contempt for Indian customs and literature when he said that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.

According to D.C. Boulger

"In a minute of remarkable lucidity and power, Macaulay turned the arguments of his opponents against themselves, and proved to the dullest mind that no other language was practically possible or desirable except English."

A resolution based on Macaulay's minute and accepted by William Bentick's government, on 7th March 1835, proclaimed English as India's official language. Macaulay argued that through the end products of the new system would emerge a class who though Indian in blood and in the colour of their skin would be English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. Thus they would strengthen the foundation of the British rule. In the words of Dr. T.N.P. Mahadevan
"To create a class of Anglicized Indians was the obvious aim - Indians, who would look to England as their 'home', who would be ashamed of their country's past, and who would do everything in — their power to enable Britain to tighten her hold on India. In the early decades English education did precisely what was expected of it; it turned out from the universities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, so many manas putras (mind born sons) of the English. A race of clerks was produced."

Mrs. Annie Besant had also admitted it

"It has seemed as though it were the British aim to turn the whole Indian nation into a race of clerks."

In 1854, the new policy of Sir Charles Wood's Despatch on education proved to have inherited more of the emphasis on English studies. It recommended that the education which they desired to see extended in India was that which had for its object, the diffusion of the improved arts, science, philosophy and literature of Europe, in short of European knowledge. The despatch was motivated by the aims that English educated Indians would be consumers of British goods and after getting government services they would be loyal to British rule. The masseducation was neglected. The Western educated youth blindly imitated the dress, manners, food styles, social behaviour of English men. They looked down upon Indian culture. They thought it against the dignity to use Indian languages and became crazy for English language. A few of them were left to atheism. They thought themselves superior to the illiterate Indian masses and went on treading on them.

Fortunately, a group of this new elite instead of abandoning its traditional ways in favour of the foreigners tried to rediscover the truth of India's past. The result was a broad movement of regeneration - an Indian Renaissance. Western learning put the tools of rationalism and scepticism in the hands of a generation of young Indians. First generation used to break the fetters of tradition; the same tools helped a later generation to cut through the chains of political thralldom.
By the time British rule was established, the Indian intellectual and cultural tradition had ceased to be creative. The orthodox preserved the old classics, but they were studied as unchangeable authorities, not as fountains of new inspiration. When British scholars went through Sanskrit literature they were filled with admiration for such works as the 'Manu Samriti', the Upanishads and Kalidasa's plays. Indian philosophy and literature became a major influence on Goethe, Schopenhauer and other thinkers of Germany which was the centre of the intellectual world. Meanwhile British archeologists and scholars were poring over the record of India's past. The praises which the Vedas received from Max Muller and the Upanishads received from Schopenhauer and the admiration showed upon Hinduism and its offshoot Buddhism by the Theosophical twins Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatski, eroded inferiority complex of Indians and produced national chauvinism. The feelings began to gain ground that Indian culture was spiritual and superior to Western materialistic culture. It produced the desire for cultural freedom. The ferment of ideas gave an expansive touch to Indian culture. The spirit of Renaissance pervaded the whole country. Indian intellectuals closely scrutinized the country's past and found that many beliefs and practices were no longer of any use and needed to be discarded; they also discovered that many aspects of India's cultural heritage were of intrinsic value to India's cultural awakening. The result was the birth of many socio-religious reform movements which in varying degrees emphasized and fought for the cultural advancement of Indian people.

Vivekananda was well versed in Eastern and Western philosophy, history and literature. So he could well analyse the glory of Indian culture and its superiority to that of the West. And he declared it with roaring success, not only to India but also to the whole world.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

By 1800, the conservative attitude was fast giving way to a new attitude which was critical of Indian society and culture. This critical approach was used by most of the officials and writers and statesmen of British to justify political and economic
enslavement of India and to proclaim that it was incapable of improvement and must, therefore, remain permanently under British tutelage. George Wheeler remarked in 1876 that Indian people were very superstitious and were bound within the great barriers of caste-d distinctions. In his words

"with such a people as this, when we have no power, either by love or law, to dash to pieces sad prejudices and abominable customs, is it to be expected that any sudden transformation can take place in India? The people are not in themselves reforming. The country is like a great lion, but one which is sleeping in the sun and not rampant and roaring. Most men are so delicately framed that they cannot study and not only a single instance can be pointed out of them having produced an intellect powerful enough to fathom the mysteries of stars. They have little passion-little ambition. They are in bondage, not so much to Europeans, as to one another, and to themselves."

However, a few Englishmen the radicals applied the advanced spiritual and rational thought of the West to the Indian situation as they saw it. They desired to make India a part of modern progressive world of science and religion.

The spiritualism of these men was aroused by the social injustice of such institutions as the caste system and untouchability, such customs as sati and infanticide and the low status of women in general and of widow in particular of Indian society. The radicals got an opportunity to influence Indian policies through James Mill, one of the leading radical philosophers of England, who came to occupy in 1871 the very important position of chief examiner in the office of the Court of Directors and William Bentick who was a radical and who became the Governor General of India in 1829. P.E. Roberts was of the opinion that William Bentick

"was undoubtedly the first Governor General openly to act on the theory that the welfare of the subjects, people was a main, perhaps the primary duty of the British in India."

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The ruling element in Indian administration continued to be imperialistic and exploitative. Thus modernisation of India was accepted by many English officials, businessmen and statesmen to make Indians better customers of British goods and reconcile them to the alien rule. They tried to follow a delicately balanced policy of partial modernisation that is a policy of introducing modernisation in some respects and blocking and preventing it in other respects.

The policy of modernising Indian society was also encouraged by Christian missionaries. The radicals were given strong support by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and other like minded Indians.

The official British efforts at reforming Indian society of its abuses were on the whole very meagre and therefore bore little fruit. The biggest achievement was the outlaying of the practice of 'Sati' in 1829, when William Bentick made it a crime to associate in any way with the burning of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre. Thus launching a frontal attack on the evil of 'Sati' by enlightened Indian reformers led by Ram Mohan Roy met success. About another evil prevalent in Indian society Grover and Grover mentioned

"Another horrible and cruel rite particularly common among the Bengalis and the Rajputs was of killing their infant daughter at birth, taking female children to be a great economic liability".

Regulations prohibiting infanticide had been passed in 1795 and 1802 but they were sternly enforced only by Bentick and Hardinge. Hardinge also suppressed the practice of making human sacrifices that had prevailed among the primitive tribe of Gonds. In 1856 the government of India passed an act enabling Hindu widows to remarry. The government acted after Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar and other reformers who had carried on a prolonged agitation in favour of them assure. But the immediate effects of these acts were negligible. All these official reforms touched no more than the fringes of the Indian social system and did not affect the life
of the vast majority of all reform had been a major cause of revolt. After the 1857 revolt, the British abandoned their previous policy of helping the social reformers. Analysing the effects of reform T.R. Holmes remarked

"The movement for the education of the native women, the contemplated law of permitting Hindu widows to marry again, the inexorable suppression of the barbarous usages which scandalised Dalhousie, were supported by a few intelligent natives, but gave deep offence to the Hindu Pandits, the Mahomedan Moulvis, and the orthodox millions who still venerated their teachings."\(^{10}\)

While social services such as education, sanitation, public health, water-supply and rural road made rapid progress in Europe during the 19th century, in India they remained at an extremely backward level. Social life was affected by the frequent breaking out of the epidemics. R.C. Dutta has given account of many such epidemics affecting the public life. He narrated the spread of cholera epidemic in 1876 in Bengal thus

"a cholera epidemic broke out, the like of which I have never witnessed, nor would like to see again. It spread in every village and affected almost every homestead, and created a universal alarm. It swept away the survivors of the storm wave in many homesteads and the homestead became deserted. It drove the population from many villages to others which were supposed to be more healthy. Fires were lighted in every house as it was supposed to kill the infection and men, women and children sat around the fire in that dismal winter, and refused all work for the time."\(^{11}\)

The British Government spent mainly on army, wars and the administrative services and starved the social services.
Caste System was the central feature of the social life of the Hindus. The higher castes headed by the Brahmins monopolized all social prestige and privileges. Inter-caste marriages, inter-dining, social mixing etc. were all forbidden. Caste often determined the choice of the profession, though exceptions were there. Caste regulations were strictly enforced by caste councils and panchayats and caste chiefs through fines, penances or expulsion from the caste. The rule of endogamy governed every caste or sub-caste.

With the British conquest of India and the resulting introduction of new social, political and economic conditions, the caste system underwent a revolution. The introduction of the British revenue-system and administration disintegrated village-communities, resulting in the evolution of a new set of social relationships and in the growing importance of the new classes of land-lords, traders, money-lenders.

Further, yet another class made its appearance in the Indian social scene and that was class of intelligentsia the byproduct of English education. It was this Indian intelligentsia who spearheaded most of the social and political organizations in the country.

Thus the British with the help of their newly introduced social, economic and political values unleashed new forces in the Indian society.

There were different angles from which caste was attacked by different social reform groups. The leading figures, belonging to lower castes, waged campaigns against upper caste domination and Brahmanical supremacy. Both the 'Brahma Samaj' and the 'Prarthana Samaj' under the out and out democratic cultural influence of the West denounced the caste as an institution itself. The 'Arya Samaj' while crusading against the minute dissection of the Hindu society into countless sub-castes aimed at reconstructing it on the original fourfold division. Telang, Ranade and Phoole founded the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' in 1873. Malabari poet Narmad and others were strenuous crusaders against the caste system. The elimination of such an atrocious social
phenomenon like untouchability became one of the planks of the platform of all social reform movements in India.

Comparing the Hindu and Muslim societies of India what Dr. Ambedkar remarked in 1940 is true to the nineteenth century conditions also

"Indeed the Muslims have all the social evils of the Hindus and something more. That something more is the compulsory system of Purdah for Muslim women."32

He felt distressed to note these evils

"But far more distressing is the fact that there is no organized movement of social reform among the Musalmans of India on a scale sufficient to bring about their eradication"33.

The government was never keen on solving any of the prevalent social problems or eradicating social evils because they realized that democratic society might emerge which would endanger their rule. After 1857, they assiduously followed the 'divide & rule' policy to perpetuate British rule.

Vivekananda was pained to observe the problems and evils of Indian society. He admitted that India was in need of social reform but he was sorry to see that the prevalent reform movements were imitating Western means and methods of work. They were mainly concerned with the problems of only upper two castes. Vivekananda wanted to go to the root of evil and bring out a new order of things, that is salvation of the people by the people. For it the people were to be educated, able to understand their needs and solve their problems.

NEW VISION OF INDIA

Now India is a free country. There is a lot of things to do in all the fields of activity. But there are some disrupting forces sown in this soil by vested interests, which
threaten the unity of India. Swami with his rare insight into history found out that even when there was no unified political government in India there was an underlying unity because of the spiritual culture and the Sanskrit language, the vehicle of that culture. So giving up all petty, local self-interests we must join together for the progress of the nation. To do that, we must be thoroughly imbued with the national ideals of renunciation and service. Swami Vivekananda said

"Renunciation and service are the national ideals of India"^{34}

Swami connected the good of the one with the good of the many by pointing out to us the unity of existence in the universe. The unity of existence is a statement of fact. Vivekananda fervently believed that the life-force of India is in her spiritual culture and the regeneration of India will be possible only through the vitalizing of her spiritual life. He said,

"The common ground that we have is our sacred traditions, our religion."^{35}

Swami Vivekananda knew it very well that it was not religion that was the cause of India's downfall but, on the contrary, the fact that her true religion, the very life and breath of her individuality, was scarcely to be found, and he knew that her only hope was a renascence of the lost spiritual culture of the ancient rishi's. His mind encompassing both the roots and the ramifications of India's problem, and his heart suffering for his countrymen. For removing the problems of country Swamiji said

"We have to give back to the nation its lost individuality and raise the masses. The Hindu, the Mohammedan, the Christian, all have trampled them under foot. Again the force to raise them must come from inside, that is, from the orthodox Hindus. In every county the evils exist not with, but against religion. Religion therefore is not to blame, but men. To effect this, the first thing we need is men, and the next is funds"^{36}
A new order is coming to the old weary world. The eternal spirituality of India is
reinterpreted by its modern mouthpiece, Swami Vivekananda, to suit modern
conditions. To accept this we must be bold. Fearlessness is the word coming like bomb-
shell from all the Upanishads.

Vivekananda stands for universal religion and world culture, and his sublime
message goes for humanity at large. His nationalism is the outcome of India’s attempt
to express herself in modern times. Yet it has a universal significance for all lands.
Inasmuch as it sets forth a lofty ideal, gives a new angle of vision and reveals a spiritual
outlook. India can remain united only on the common ground of her sacred traditions.
Vedanta provides us with a philosophy of life and a scheme of the universe.

The message of India to the world is the idea of oneness of the universe. With
the imprinting of this idea on his consciousness a man will discover peace within
himself and will be at peace with all. India must preach this idea of oneness to save the
world from a major catastrophe. India is often said to be the land of religion. Swami
Vivekananda says:

"India did not give freedom to society. As a result, Indian society did not
develop much and could not have a variety of experiments in the social context. But it
gave freedom to thought. As a result India excelled in wonderful efflorescences of
thoughtpatterns evolved here. India gave freedom of discussion and that is why, to
our astonishment we could see atheists even in old days preaching their philosophy
right at the gates of temples. This shows how much freedom was allowed to thought,
though there was no freedom for anybody to choose any way of life." 37

"He was never tired of showing to his countrymen the value and significance
of the culture they had inherited from their ancestors—a culture in comparison with
which any other civilization, past or present, paled in to insignificance—till their
hearts throbbed at the very name of India. Swami Vivekananda clearly poited out that
Indian nationalism was to be based on the greatness of the past through various new
ideas also had to be assimilated in the process of growth. If we have to be true to the
genius of the race, if we have to appeal to the soul of the nation, we have to drink deep of the fountain of the past and then proceed to build the future. Through the study of the Swami's lectures and utterances, the eyes of the educated Indians were opened to the hidden beauties and treasures of their religion and they came more and more to see how Vedanta alone could claim the supreme position of being a universal religion.

In the opinion of Swami, the Orient would be identified by greater activity and energy like that of west, as the latter would profit by a mixture of Eastern introspection and the meditative habit. The Swami made Mr. Francis H. Leggett, one of the wealthy and influential residents of the city of New York, the President of this newly formed Vedanta Society.38

Swami Vivekananda was a great patriotic saint of India. When we hear the great Swami speaking eloquently on any particular topic, we find his ideas entering into our heart and creating a commotion there. We feel an inspiration and want to jump into action, but when we are acquainted with his viewing of a problem from different standpoints, we sometime gets confused. It requires a long course of deep thinking and meditation to get a correct idea of them, not wholly but in parts suitable only for us. So finding out one's own adjustment, one's Swadharma, presupposes a long course of mental and spiritual awareness and discipline.

He brought out Vedanta for the common man from the solitary caves where alone it was thought upon and practiced. He said

"Let New India arise—out of the peasants' cottage, grasping the plough' out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains." 39
To follow the basic truth is all right and is necessary, nay, essential. But pragmatic creatures as we are, we want to see knowledge in action. We like science but we praise technology more. So also we must see how our knowledge could help us in our difficulties, guide us in our striving and lead us to the goal. Hence the implications of Vedantic knowledge must be found out, stressed and applied in life. Swami Vivekananda was acquainted with the dire poverty and helplessness of the people. Swamiji said,"

"The one thing that is at the root of all evils in India is the condition of the poor. The poor in the West are devils; compared to them, ours are angels, and it is therefore so much the easier to raise our poor. The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, to develop their lost individuality."

He was convinced that 'no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others'. He affirmed that the degeneration of India started when the Indians secluded themselves from the world –current. India must rebuild herself by advancing in political, economic and social spheres. When she has effectively done that the world will listen to her eternal, spiritual message. Swamiji says,

"There are many things to be done, but means are wanting in this country. We have brains, but no hands. We have the doctrine of Vedanta, but we have not the power to reduce it into practice. In our books, there is the doctrine of universal equality, but in work we make great distinctions. It was in India that unselfish and disinterested work of the most exalted type was preached, but I practice we are awfully cruel, awfully heartless –unable to think of anything besides our own mass-of-flesh bodies...I too believe that India will awake again, if anyone could love with all his heart the people of the country –bereft of the grace of affluence, of blasted fortune, their discretion totally lost, down – trodden, ever-starved, quarrelsome, and envious. Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost for the well – being of the millions of their countrymen who are gradually sinking lower in the vortex of destitution and ignorance."
Democracy in India cannot be secular in the sense of anti-God or non-Godly. So in the Indian context the word secular is slowly acquiring a new meaning of freedom of conscience and religious pursuit as against its original meaning. This is due to the impact of spiritual forces and the resulting climate created by saints and seers of India. Swamiji says,

"Have fire and spread all over. Work, work. Be the servant while leading. Be unselfish, and never listen to one friend in private accusing another. Have infinite patience, and success is yours. ....Take care! Beware of everything that is untrue: static to truth, and we shall succeed, maybe slowly, but surely. Work as if on each of you depended the whole work. Fifty centuries are looking on you, the future of India depends on you. Work on."^2

Swamiji with his rare insight into history found out that even when there was no unified political government in India there was an underlying unity because of the spiritual culture and the Sanskrit language, the vehicle of that culture. So giving up all petty, local self-interests we must join together for the progress of the nation. To do that we must be thoroughly imbued with the national ideas of renunciation and service. Vivekananda found no conflict in loving both his country and the world. Vivekananda was against all privilege, not merely of hereditary caste. All privilege is based on tyranny. Where privilege is more, tyranny also is intense. So he wanted the abolition of all privileges, physical, intellectual and spiritual.

Swami Vivekananda is the architect of modern India. To acquire first-hand knowledge of the Indian people, he went round the whole country as a wandering monk. Swami Vivekananda said,

"Feel, my children, feel; feel for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden; feel till the heart stops and the brain reels and you think you will go mad; then pour the soul out at the feet of the Lord, and then will come power, help, and indomitable energy. Struggle, was my motto for the last ten years. Struggle, still say I. When it was
all dark, Issued to say, struggle; when light is breaking in, I still say, struggle. Be not afraid, my children".

In the context of New India Swamiji’s vision is,

“On one side, New India is saying, ‘if we only adopt western ideas, western language, western food, western dress, and western manners, we shall be as strong and powerful as the western nations; on the other, old, India is saying, ‘Fools! By imitation, others’ ideas never become one’s own; nothing, unless earned, is your own. Does the ass in the lion’s skin become the lion?’ On one side, new India is saying, ‘What the western nations do is surely good, otherwise, how did they become so great?’ On the other side, old India is saying, ‘The flash of lightning is intensely bright, but only for a moment; look out boys, it is dazzling your eyes. Beware!’”

Swami Vivekananda said,

“To make a great future India, the whole secret lies in organization, accumulation of power, co-ordination of wills; organization alone is the primary means for all progress and the only way for the conservation of energy.”

Swami Vivekananda wanted to make old and rich civilization of India to take a new shape and stand forth as a fresh, energetic, and vigorous civilization before the modern world. For that purpose, he wanted India to assimilate the spirit and technique of modern science which has come to us from the West; but this capacity to assimilate the dynamic scientific culture of the West depended upon a prior energizing of the national tradition in the minds of his countrymen. Without this strengthening of the national heritage, India’s response to the West, he held, will result in a patchy imitation instead of a healthy assimilation. He warned us against that temptation and danger. He visualized a new India in which the spirit of equality, social awareness, and practical efficiency of the modern West would get happily blended with the mature gentleness and tolerance of Indian tradition, with its deep spiritual awareness and passion which has made Indian history a saga of spiritual aspiration and realization. He wanted India to be young, vigorous, and progressive; and yet he wanted all these to be achieved as
the fulfillment of the spiritual ideal and purpose. Swamiji placed before us his great message of nation-building based on spirituality. He wanted that all improvements to be effected in this country should be effected not at the cost of the national asset which is spirituality, but as flowing from it and leading up to it. He interpreted Indian history to demonstrate to us that progress in social and other issue is the fruit of the strengthening of the nation's spirituality, whatever other lessons the histories of other nations may teach. He gave that warning because he found a tendency around him to relegate religion to second place, or even to treat it as an enemy of social progress so as to lead India on absolutely secular lines. This kind of tendency, useful within limits, might yet create mischief in our country and rob the nation of its spiritual stamina. It was therefore necessary that the warning should be issued, and the nation got it in time through the over ful and authentic voice of Swami Vivekananda. He wanted us that if India gave up spirituality and her age-old way of life, she would perish.

Swami Vivekananda was to warn his countrymen later on:

"India is immortal if she persists in her search for God; but if she gives it up and takes to politics and social conflicts, she will die."\(^{46}\)

Swami Vivekananda has left us a rich legacy of thought and inspiration. If India assimilates them, she will become the hope of the nations. That is the historical acquired role of India, according to Swami Vivekananda.
REFERENCES


3. Ibid. p. xi.


9. ibid., p. 350.


12. Ibid. p. 416.


22. Ibid.

23. Ibid


26. Ibid op.cit.


33. Ibid. p. 223.


