Swami Vivekananda was a great personality, contributing in various ways to the enrichment of the world culture. His contributions covered almost all aspects of life. He was particularly concerned with the spiritual renaissance of mankind. His idea of spirituality was not limited to any particular aspect of life, but it embraced the whole of it. He represented the very soul of Hinduism and its spiritual grandeur. His message of spiritualism contributed remarkably towards strengthening not only Hindu religion and society but also Indian nationalism. He revived Hindu spiritualism and established its superiority over Islam and Christianity. He also pointed out the weaknesses of Hindu religion and society. He made the Hindus realize the degraded position to which they had fallen and inspired them to regain their past glory. He suggested to them that if they would pursue the path shown by the Vedanta they would realize the soul of their religion and be able to build a glorious
society and nation once more. He gave the message of Hindu spiritualism to the people in the West as well which established not only its superiority there but also made the Hindus self confident of their religion and culture. He awakened Hinduism and led to its progress in the form described by Sister Nivedita as aggressive Hinduism. The Hindus no more remained shy or different of their religion and culture. On the contrary, they started championing their cause openly and many scholars came forward to defend it.

Swami Vivekananda raised the status of religion and spiritualism among the people of the entire world. He believed in the fundamental unity of all religions. He, therefore, preached tolerance, equality and co-operation among the peoples of all faiths. Service to humanity occupied a very important place in the teachings of Vivekananda. He regarded education, emancipation of women and removal of poverty as absolute necessities for pursuing religion. "Swami Vivekananda was a pragmatic spiritualist. He did not believe in preaching hollow sermons to penury stricken people. He firmly held the view that happiness is not possible without economic progress. He also believed that spiritual progress would lead to self realization of individuals and that would lead to social and national
upliftment. He believed in making a man in fact a man and regarded it as the basis of all-round progress of a society and a nation.

Swami Vivekananda participated in building up the Indian nationalism. “The more strength is infused in to the national life, the more will language, art, and music, etc. become spontaneously instinct with ideas and life” (*Works* VI: 189). His exhortations have nationalistic fervour. With that passion, he once exhorted:

Great enterprise, boundless courage, tremendous energy, and, above all, perfect obedience- these are the only traits that lead to individual and national regeneration. (*Works* VI: 349)

Again, Vivekananda called the people to arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached. The way he exhorted and established the superiority of Hindu religion and spiritualism, certainly provided confidence, self glorification and patriotism among the Hindus and that helped in the nation building. He and his mission have certainly played an important role in reviving the rich inheritance of the ancient Hindu culture and creating a spirit of national consciousness. He surely helped in strengthening the national sentiments and inspired many a Indian political leaders like Mahatma Gandhi,
Subhash Chandra Bose, Balgangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Jawaharlal Nehru, etc. These political leaders did not tire to praise Swami Vivekananda. Remembering Swami Vivekananda’s contribution Jawaharlal Nehru once said that He was no politician in the ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great founders of the national modern movement of India.

Undoubtedly, Vivekananda was one of the great patriot sons of India of his time, and even of all times to come. In spite of being very catholic, tolerant and widely traveled, he was proud of India and her great culture. He had great faith in the future role of India in the world. Praising the greatness of his country he said that If there is any land on this earth which can lay claim to be the blessed Punya Bhumi, it is India. As an argument to support his faith in the greatness of Indian culture, he pointed out that dozens of great cultures were born in this world, lived for centuries, but today Indian culture is the only ancient culture which is not only alive but which may guide the world in future. Spirituality is the characteristic of Indian culture that is her gift to the world. Besides spirituality the world has to learn sympathy, tolerance, and other human virtues from this great country. While praising India, Vivekananda used
such sentimental language and inspiring words that he was known as the very embodiment of emotional patriotism.

It was because of his patriotism that Vivekananda pleaded for political liberation of the country. His demand for political liberation presented in most inspiring and strong language, influenced almost all the political leaders of his time.

Race, religion, language, Government—all these together make a nation, considering all these elements India is a nation, a nation of the Aryans, Vedic religion, Sanskrit language and its own cultural heritage. What is however required to make it a complete nation is sovereignty. It is therefore that Vivekananda worked for awakening of the masses, the development of their physical and moral strength and creating in them a consciousness of the pride in the ancient glory and greatness of India. It is hence that he was hailed as one of the great architects of modern nationalism in India. Urging the Indian masses to regain their individuality and to rise to the occasion, he said, “A nation is sure to die when the main purpose of its life is hurt” (*Works V*: 457). Swami Vivekananda fostered the Indian nationalism both by his life and precept. His great triumph in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago indirectly helped the cause of
Indian nationalism by raising the Indains from the slough of despair and despondency into which they had fallen, and awakening them to a sense of pride in their own greatness which lies at the root of Indian nationalism.

Swami Vivekananda told his people that nationalism must be broad based—both in ideal and scope. He exhorted the young men in whom he had great faith, that in order to become great as a nation they must cultivate strength of the mind as well as of the body.

It will be seen that though Vivekananda drank from the streams of English literature he stuck to his country’s spiritual moorings and sought to uplift his countrymen by application of modern methods and appealing to their reason. He realized that a renaissance was coming and Indian should be equipped to welcome it. All was not rosy when he started on his mission. But by his personal magnetism, sweet reasonable and disarming logic he won over his opponents so far as to obtain a peaceful hearing. His gentle persuasive speech led his audience into sympathetic understanding. With this change of attitude, he laid emphasis on reason and patriotic
instincts and by impassioned eloquence carried the youth of the day with him.

The nationalism of Swami Vivekananda was based on his intense patriotism. To uplift his countrymen and to improve national condition, he propounded the doctrine that the service to the low and the down-trodden was the real service to God, which found eloquent expression in one word-daridranarayan. It conveys an idea of the highest type of patriotism to which it is difficult to find a parallel in the history of the world. His clarion call to the youths of his country to shed fear, gather strength, endure sufferings and sacrifice everything, even life, for the sake of the motherland and the service of her poor groveling masses, placed his nationalism on a lofty foundation. These sincere appeals came straight from the innermost core of his heart. In this light Swami Vivekananda might well be called the father of the modern Indian nationalism as he largely created it and also embodied in his own life its highest and noblest elements. He made a remarkable contribution towards Hindu religion, culture, society and Indian nationalism. The Ramakrishna Mission, therefore, became a strong movement within the Indian renaissance and is still doing useful service to the Indian Society.
Swami Vivekananda roused the religious spirit of Indian from the slumber of ages, expounded in clear terms and in a more practical form, the sense of spirituality handed down from the Vedic period in unbroken succession, the spirituality which forms the warp and woof of our very being. He belongs to the class of great seers of Truth. His intellect was great but greater still was his heart. He aimed at building the Hindu society and civilization, the great ideal of Vedanta which was one of equality and indefinite modifiability, of human character and the absence of distinction between man and man. The differences seen may be only in manifestation and not in potential divinity and all could be brought up to the highest and all could become the greatest by the resolving of our differences, cultural, social and political resulting from caste, and the other distinctions. Swami Vivekananda called his Vedanta teaching, a practical Vedanta. In making Vedanta practical he particularly laid emphasis upon the following teachings of Vedanta: oneness, faith in ourselves, God realizations, respect for other religions, and synthesis between East and the West.

The idea of unity or oneness in the cosmos is the central idea of Vedanta philosophy. This oneness is not only in the multiplicity
but also in the facts and ideals, and present and future, in the words of Swami Vivekananda as uttered in his speech on "Practical Vedanta," 'The actual should be made to coincide with the life eternal.'

In the practical Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda, faith is above everything else. He realized that it is the main cause of the present degeneration and of years of slavery under the foreign yoke. Realizing this fact Swami Vivekananda urged in most of his lectures in very inspiring words to the Indians to have faith in themselves, in their heritage their philosophy, their language, their literature and their physical, mental, and spiritual strength. This faith is essentially as an Atman, a part of the Brahman, the universal force present everywhere.

Swami Vivekananda professes that God is realization in oneself and in society is the teaching of Vedanta. This will result not only in the individual evolution but also in the upliftment of the masses. Laying emphasis upon this practical teaching of Vedanta, Vivekananda said: "if you are a real lover of Shiva, you must see Him in everything and in everyone"(Works III: 115) In the tradition
of the teachings of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda preached tolerance towards all the religions of the world. This is particularly required in India since it is the home of the followers of almost all the great religions of the world. But Vivekananda was against blind imitation of the West. He urged every nation to follow its own Swadharma.

In his sympathetic outlook, Swami Vivekananda considered both East and West as mutually complementary though apparently contradictory. The advantages of the contact with the West have been elaborated by so many thinkers including those of Renaissance and modern period in India. But no one raised his voice so high as did Swami Vivekananda, in pointing out the advantages to the West of coming in contact of India. He also warned that without the spiritual contact with the East, the West cannot live for a long time smoothly.

Vivekananda sends out his call to man everywhere to awake from his hypnotism of weakness. We find this clarion call to arise and awake in many of his writings. It is a free translation by him of a famous verse of one of the Upanishads, the Katha Upanishad. In the original Sanskrit, it sounds a powerful utterance: Uttishthata,
jagrata, prapyavaran nibodhata. Its literal translation is: ‘Arise awake, and approaching the great ones, enlighten yourself.’ What is that goal? What is that enlightenment to be gained?-the realization by every man and woman of his or her universal spiritual nature, and the projecting, out of that fullness and richness within, that universal humanistic impulse into the outside world. That is the awakening which the people of the world will have to experience in this modern age, if they are to achieve international peace and a crime-free social order. Vivekananda spent every ounce of his energy to educate modern humanity in this great vision of human excellence and its implementation. Though born in India, he was not a mere Indian. He was international in his sympathies and outlook. He denounced the upper classes in the severest language:

You, the upper classes of India,-do you think you are alive? You are but mummies ten thousand years old: It is among those whom your ancestors despised as ‘walking carrions’ that the little of vitality there is still in India is to be found; and it is you who are the real ‘walking corpses’. (Datta, Patriot 337)

He holds out the following vision of India’s future greatness.
Let her arise-out of the peasants' cottage, grasping the plough, out of peasants cottage, grasping the plough, out of the huts of the fisherman,...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 the groves and forests, from hills and mountains. (338)

Though an ascetic, Vevekananda was patriot of patriots. The thought of restoring the pristine glory of India by resuscitation among her people the spiritual vitality which was dormant, but not dead, was always the uppermost thought in his mind. His great disciple, Sister Nivedita, who was his constant companion, has remarked: “Throughout those years, in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed” (Majumdar, *Historical* 104). Urged by such an intense feeling of patriotism Swamiji though he kept himself aloof from politics, held the ideal of political freedom before his countrymen, specially the young men, as their immediate goal. To a group of young men who met him at Dacca during his tour in 1901, and asked for his advice he said:
Read Bankim Chandra and emulate his deshabhakti (patriotism) and Sanatana dharma (principles of the heroic band of Sannyasins as depicted in the Ananda-Math). Your duty should be service to motherland. India should be freed politically first. (Datta, *Patriot* 337)

Referring to the policy followed by the Indian National Congress, he told them that that was not the way to build up patriotism anywhere. Beggar’s bowl had no place in a Banik’s (merchant’s) world of machine, mammon and merchandise. Everything had got to be controlled and directed by the invocation of human conscience. In his lecture on the “Future of India” he said that we lack unity and fellow-feeling which are the secrets of national greatness. He cited the example of Japan and showed how those two factors enabled small nations to rule over huge unwieldy nations. Then he continued:

And the bigger the nation, the more unwieldy it is. Born, as it were, a disorganized mob, they cannot combine. All these dissensions must stop...If one of our countrymen stands up and tries to become great we all try to hold
him down, but if a foreigner comes and tries to kick us, it is all right.  

(Works III: 108-9)

Swamiji pointed out that disunion and jealousy of each other have been the greatest defects in our national life. Here are his denunciations. We cannot combine, we do not love each other; we are intensely selfish, not three of us can come together without hating each other, without being jealous of each other.

Thus the ideal of nationalism preached by Swamiji was based on the four solid rocks of

1) The awakening of the masses that form the basis of the nation.

2) Development of physical and moral strength.

3) Unity based on common spiritual ideas.

4) Consciousness of, and pride in, the ancient glory and greatness of India.

These were the four pillars on which, according to Swamiji, Indian nationalism must rest, and it can be hardly denied that he was the first who clearly emphasized these ideas and directly contributed, perhaps more than anybody else, to sow the seeds of national development on this line. How his phenomenal success in America indirectly contributed to the same end has already been mentioned.
Two facts are especially noteworthy. At the very moment when Swamiji regarded the upliftment of the masses as the chief item in national regeneration, not only the Indian politicians generally, but even eminent national leaders like B.C. Pal, were scared by the very idea of the masses being drawn into politics, as that would lead to anarchy and revolution. In the second place, when our political leaders regarded meetings and petition to the British rulers as the only way of India’s emancipation, Swamiji raised his voice against this policy of begging-bowl. In both these respects he anticipated the line of future political progress in India, which was largely the result of his own stirring exhortations. His scattered suggestions on reforms in various departments of Indian life show that he was in favour of ruthlessly removing those evils in religious thought and practice, social theories and customs, principles and method of education, attitude towards women and low castes etc., which are not in accordance with, and hinder the growth of, spiritual life according to the doctrine of Vedanta; for spirituality is the lodestar of Indian culture to which we must always look for direction. This is the yardstick for measuring the extent of reforms, and the compass needle for determining their direction.
A nation lives by the idealism that shapes its destiny. The dominant feature of Hinduism is its emphasis on the development of spiritual life, which finds fulfillment in seeking God within and without Civilization is sustained by its ability to transmit the spiritual elements of its culture to posterity. The essential feature of the Indian outlook on life is to glorify the spirit over matter, light over darkness, eternal freedom over temporal enjoyments. The philosophy of material self-sufficiency is dangerous as it keeps us bound to the objective world. The real fulfillment in human life is found in the realization of Truth which makes us absolutely free. The one doctrine by which Indian culture is best is that of tat tvam asi—That thou art. The divine which is within us, and which is behind everything, is the essence of our soul.

The Indian attitude accepts the spirit in man as immortal. It is eternal, all-pervading, unchanging, and immovable, by realizing this great truth, we become free and divine. The Indian mind is coloured by this vision of truth. This eternal longing for the realm of spirit, its deep and abiding faith in the divinity of man, of man, of which all beings and things are the manifestation, the indispensable necessity
of having spiritual experience in life are the distinguishing features of Indian culture.

The Indian mind does not create division between nature and spirit, between worldly life and spiritual quest. It seeks to create harmony in life by its ability to accept the unity behind diversity. The goal of religion is the opening of a new dimension in life. With the deepening of our spiritual consciousness, we see this reflection of divinity within and without. From the emphasis on this presence of the Divine in life, it follows that each individual is potentially divine. This renewal of consciousness is the second birth. To have this spiritual awakening leading to communion with God is the goal of Indian culture. This brings out the distinction between intellectual recognition and spiritual realization. Ideas and ideals are not dead things. They are living and charged with immense vitality. They impel us to think that life is not merely a physical phenomenon or a biological process. Life is divine. The goal of life is communion with the divinity which pervades and upholds this world. He is the life of our lives, the ground of existence. He is the source of strength, and purity.
India has given birth to innumerable great women who dedicated themselves to realize truth in their natural habitat, who exemplified the idealism of discharging one’s natural obligations in life to be of higher importance, and the capacity to undergo suffering for idealism. They have enabled us to remember our divine heritage. Women are everywhere the custodians of culture. The position of women in any society is a true index of its spiritual and cultural growth. Through their loving sacrifice, other members of the family remain civilized. If each woman dedicates her life in creating harmony and peace, this world will certainly be a better place to live in. The refinement of man by woman is said to be the essence of civilization. The impulsive and harsh nature of man is changed in the presence of a pure and loving woman. By creating a healthy and peaceful family life, we will be entitled to live in a global village. No wonder that the ancient lawgiver, Manu, said: “One Vedic teacher excels ten ordinary teachers in glory; a father excels a hundred Vedic teachers in glory.” Mothers are the greatest custodians of Hindu culture. The noble character of parents does evoke the reverential attitude of the children. The home and its healthy atmosphere is a great source of spiritual training in India. It has been well said,
“Centuries of life make a little history and centuries of history make a little tradition.” A culture may be compared to a torch that is passed on from hand to hand down the generations.

Indian culture deteriorated in course of time and the women lost their prestige in the social fabric. Swami Vivekananda wrote to Sister Nivedita on July 29, 1897:

Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man, but a woman; a real lioness, to work for the Indians, women specially. India cannot yet produce great women; she must borrow them from other nations, Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination, and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted.

(Tathagatnanda, *Meditation* 201)

Backwardness of the women and the people in general made Swamiji restless and he drained out every ounce of his energy to find solutions to the problem. Sister Nivedita writes in *The Master as I Saw Him*:
Our Master, at any rate, regarded the Order to which he belonged, as one whose lot was cast for all time with the cause of woman and the people. This was the cry that rose to his lips instinctively, when he dictated to the phonograph in America, the message he sent to the Raja of khetri. It was the one thought, too with which he would turn to the disciple at his side, whenever he felt himself nearer than usual to death, in a foreign country, alone. ‘Never forget!’ he would then say, ‘the word is, woman and the people’. (356-57)

Swamiji’s own spiritual experience, backed by his deep and penetrating knowledge of Vedanta, enabled him to see God behind man and woman. Therefore he was convinced of their innate capacity to elevate their own position by harnessing this divine energy lying deeply embedded in every self. Hence, Swamiji said that the upliftment of the woman, the awakening of the masses, must come first, and then only can any real good come for India. Swamiji had a great hope about the potentiality of the Indian women. Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. And our Indian
women are as capable of doing it as any in the world. To Swamiji "education" is the real key that will open the door for all-around advancement. According to Swamiji:

Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man, and religion is the innermost core of education. The role of a comprehensive education is to bring forth hidden power to enable the student to have life-building, man making, character-making, assimilation, "My idea is first of all to bring out the gems of spirituality that are stored up in our books and in the possession of a few only, hidden, as it were, in monasteries and in forests- to bring them where it is hidden, but from the still more accessible chest, the language in which is preserved, the encrustation of centuries Sanskrit words. In one word, I want to make them popular." (Works III: 290)

History has paid eloquent tribute to Swamiji for being the apostle of practical Vedanta. Swamiji looked upon women as shakti incarnate, as living embodiments of the Universal Supreme Mother. Therefore, he never accepted the inequality between the sexes. As he wrote:
it is very difficult to understand why in this country (India) so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings. 

(*Works VII: 214*)

One should not think that Swamiji was unaware of the psychological and physiological differences between men and women. That is fundamental. Swamiji knew very well that men and women need not compete with each other, for each is great in his or her own place as assigned by nature. Their roles are complementary, "The perfect balance of the society is only through their mutual cooperation based on cordiality and respect. Swamiji said:

Woman is as courageous as man. Each is equally good in his or her own way. What man can bring up a child with such patience, endurance, and love as the woman can? The one has developed the power of doing, the other, the power of suffering. If woman cannot act, neither can man suffer. The whole universe is one of perfect balance. (*Works II: 26*)
Swamiji always advocated equal rights and opportunities for all. In motherhood we see the perfect manifestation of divine qualities – self-forgetfulness and self-negating love that knows no limitations. Indians see every woman on earth – irrespective of her social status and age – as an emblem of sweetness, ungrudging love, patience, forbearance, modesty, faithfulness and all other divine qualities. She is a true replica of the Divine Mother eternally engaged in the welfare of her children. Speaking about Shri Ramakrishna, his spiritual preceptor, Swamiji said:

This man (Shri Ramakrishna) meant by worshipping woman, that to him every woman’s face was that of the Blissful Mother, and nothing but that. I myself have seen this man standing before those women whom society would not touch, and falling at their feet bathed in tears, saying, “Mother, in one form Thou art in the street, and in another form the universe. I salute thee, Mother, I salute Thee. (Works IV: 176)

Following the great teachings of Shri Ramakrishna, Swamiji regarded all women, high or low, ascetic or householder, married or unmarried, child or adult, as the living and visible embodiment of
the Divine Mother and therefore he exhorted us to worship them in a pure way, as Mothers. They are *shakti* or Powers of God. Says Swamiji:

Do you know who is the real ‘*shakti worshiper*’? It is he who knows that God is the omnipresent force in the universe and sees in women the manifestation of that force. Many men here look upon their women in this light. Manu, again, has said that gods bless those families where women are happy and well treated. Here men treat their women as well as can be desired, and hence they are so prosperous, so learned, so free, and so energetic. But why is it that we are slavish, miserable, and dead? The answer is obvious. (*Works V: 26*)

Now, the ideal of women in India is that of a Mother, the mother first, and the mother last. The word woman calls up to the mind the Hindu, motherhood; and God is called Mother. Swamiji says further:

In India, the Mother is the center of the family and our highest ideal. She is to us the representative of God, as God is the Mother of the Universe. Our God is both
Personal and Absolute; the Absolute is male, the Personal female. And thus, it comes that we now say: ‘The first manifestation of God is the hand that rocks the cradle’. (*Prabuddha* 433)

Swamiji wanted to make every woman conscious of her inner divinity and to behave accordingly. This great cultural heritage, if allowed to orient our mind, will enhance the dignity of national life.

Without the ability to create this spiritual consciousness, it is not possible to teach ethics. Swamiji wanted us to cultivate a sympathetic attitude so that we should look upon man (and woman) in the most charitable light. Even the public women received sympathy from him.

I have to sneer at the woman walking in the street, because society wants it! She, my saviour, she whose, street-walking is the cause of the chastity of other women! Think of that. Think, men and women, of this question in your mind. (*Works II*: 34)

Having deep conviction in the fundamental Indian doctrine of the motherhood of God, Swamiji, unlike other great reformers like Rammohan and Swami Dayanand, found justification in the ideal of
Mother-worship of the *Tantras* – of course in its ideal form. He definitely condemned from the depth of his heart the diabolical practices of degenerated *Tantric* rites. Here again due to Shi Ramakrishna’s teaching, Swamiji did appreciate the real spirit behind such practices.

The modern materialistic attitude of life keeps us riveted to gross enjoyment and consequently, we lose our soul in the game of life. To the Hindu mind marriage is sacramental, and family life, imbued with the sublime attitude, affords each member the unique scope to manifest the native divine qualities through mutual service and self-sacrifice. Conjugal love is to be sublimated into devotion to the spiritual welfare of the entire family, helping all to widen and deepen their character and to perform their domestic and social duties as a means to spiritual growth and enlightenment. That great idealism is thwarted by the encroachment of rampant sensualism. Motherhood is the natural outcome of wifehood. Hindu woman enters into family life to prepare herself through austerity, penances, fasts and prayers, to become a good mother. Their physical contact takes place with the greatest prayer between man and wife, the prayer that is going to bring into the world another soul fraught with...
a tremendous power for good or for evil. Is it a joke? Is it a simple nervous satisfaction? Is it a brute enjoyment of the body? Says the Hindu: No. Parental influence is of momentous importance in the life of a child and therefore, Hindu tradition enjoins certain rigorous disciplines on the couple. An *Aryan* (noble) child is born through prayer. “The sensuous enjoyment does not help to bring forth good children. Those children that come with curses, that slip into this world, just in a moment of inadvertence, because that could not be prevented—what can we expect of such pregnancy? These children may be veritable demons—burning, murdering and robbing.

The ideal woman of India as envisioned by Swamiji was the one who could emulate the greatness of Sita, Savitri, Gargi and Lakshmi Bai. Swamiji paid eloquent tribute to the immortal character of Sita—“This glorious Sita, purer than purity itself, all-patience and all suffering.” At the same time, he wanted Indian women to imitate the intellectual brilliance of Gargi, the spiritual resources and fearlessness of Savitri, and physical prowess of Lakshmi Bai. Indian woman should make herself a model of high idealism based on spiritual excellence and practical efficiency and dynamism. He definitely urged Indians to be self-reliant,
courageous, and active without losing the eternal feminine qualities which add grace to life. Having known the great privileges enjoyed by the western women to manifest their personalities and having spoken on many occasions eulogistically, Swamiji never lost sight of his main point that the goal of human life is to seek total freedom—moksha. He was very explicit on it. “Hinduism indicates one duty, only one, for the human soul. It is to seek to realize the permanent amidst the evanescent. No one presumes to point out any one way in which this may be done”(Tathagatnanda, Meditation: 207). He was a great champion of absolute equality and liberty for all. Yet he never approved of freedom for cheap popularity and public approval. Everybody is expected to follow the guidelines of the eternal core of truth embodied in our Upanishads. Swamiji was a prophet of strength, “strength that comes of touching the feet of God” and he wanted us all to cultivate this strength through our spiritual evolution. Therefore, men and women of vision and strength of character will be the “creative minority,” ushering in a new change in society. Swamiji thus had tremendous faith in the glorious future of Indian women who will be inspired to seek after the excellence of modern living without ever losing the excellence of their ancient
Indian heritage. In short, he exhorted Indian women to have a comprehensive philosophy of life, a life of expanded spiritual consciousness.

With such an education, women will solve their own problems. They have all the time been trained in helplessness, servile dependence on other, and so they are good only to weep their eyes out at the slightest approach of a mishap or danger. Along with other things they should acquire the spirit of valor and heroism. In the present day, it has become necessary for them also to learn self-defence.

Education is a great source of power, and as such that power is to be handled carefully for creative purposes or else it will overpower us. The misdirected power will bring disaster. Educational institutions have opened the doors but have failed to open the minds of those educated in them. The real problem of education has to be solved in the light of a true concept of man. Education wants to bring out the hidden potentialities of man without knowing him properly. Hence, the most important point is to have a proper concept of man. Man's outlook on life determines his way of life. The correct Image of man is essential as it plays a vital
role in deciding his pattern of life. It accounts for the strength and the weakness of each culture. A life devoid of meaning and purpose is regarded as of little value. The crowning glory of life is self-knowledge, as all troubles are due to ignorance. This kind of self-knowledge does not mean the superficial study of the objective person. It actually means probing into his essential being, the invisible and elusive aspect of life at it gives him his uniqueness in the world of nature. Man is the epitome of the cosmos, an immortal spirit with an effective will, and therefore, man occupies the most important position in Swami Vivekananda’s teachings. This very vital feature can never be eliminated from his philosophy, as Swamiji’s dominant interest in life was man. Naturally, then, in his scheme of education the spiritual concept of man and his glorious future loom large. His greatest contribution in education is his fascinating concept of man. Man is divine, and the entire purpose of effective education is to help unfold that inner divinity—the only great source of wisdom, peace, strength and all other excellences of life. Apart from body and mind, man has a soul; this soul—the divine essence, the Real Man-animates, integrates, sustains and directs his psychophysical organism. This inner essence is covered over with
alien coverings of worldliness. We are sure to discern from this
grand concept of the divine heritage of man a new gospel of joy and
hope. This is the greatest discovery that outshines all other
discoveries of all great scientists. Intellect, which can unravel the
deepest secrets of nature, is unable to know the real essence of man.
Only intuitive knowledge can comprehend that. The knowledge of
the spiritual dimension of man is of supreme importance for his real
well-being and right growth. The spiritual side of man, if properly
nurtured through appropriate education, will certainly solve all our
crucial problems of life with its own inner strength. After having
intellectual conviction of our own innate divinity, we must have a
second birth, from sensuous being to spiritual being. This awakening
will transform our life by enkindling our latent spiritual possibilities.
Man must be educated in the knowledge of his own native divinity.
There can never be more hopeful message to him, especially in our
present sick age. Effective education should give a proper direction.
a proper perspective to channelize the emotions in higher directions.
Power disciplined means power increased. Giving higher directions
to this power will bring in its trail all sorts of blessings-purity,
righteousness, honesty and integrity. Value-oriented education must
attach maximum importance to unfolding the inner man through spiritual disciplines of self-control and morality. Education is spiritual sadhana to manifest our latent divine possibilities. Moral life is closest to spiritual life. Selflessness is the prime moral virtue. It is through the moral life that the real self of man find expression. As long as man is deluded by the body-mind idea, all human interest is bound to be subservient to sense life. He should be aware of his spiritual essence. Spirit sustains the body-mind complex. Its supremacy is to be recognized. Right understanding is necessary for right living. From moral virtues proceed happiness; from vice, misery. Vice undermines human life, whereas virtue stabilizes it at all levels—physical, mental, intellectual, moral and spiritual. We suffer more from abuse of power and possessions than from lack of them. True education should help us to bring forth the latent divine excellence.

Man is essentially pure spirit ever shining. It is the radiance of the spiritual Self that illuminates the psychophysical system by giving the mind the organs and the body a semblance of consciousness. They are entirely dependent on It. Spirit is the only source of energies. All other energies—physical, biological, psychical
are simply diverse manifestations of the Spirit. By identifying ourselves with spirit we inherit spiritual powers. Man has the choice of making decisions as well as choice of actions. He can overcome, control and direct the lower self by identifying himself with his wider, truer and higher self. This self-mastery constitutes the real nature of man. Man’s spiritual progress is proportionate to the development of this spiritual energy. Man suffers much from his misconception of himself and also brings suffering unto other, thinking them separate from him.

Education that does not take the initiative in arousing spiritual values of life is no education worth the name, as it gives knowledge but not wisdom. The new orientation is required to create a refreshing and constructive vision of education which is emotionally, intellectually and spiritually satisfying and inspiring. Swamiji’s educational scheme base on Vedanta is such a grand philosophy as it is concerned with the development of the whole man.

There is another strong point in favour of self-knowledge. We cannot know ourselves by having knowledge of the world. Man is thus his own greatest mystery. He does not understand the vast veiled universe into which he has been cast for the reason that he
does not understand himself. The Supreme Reality sustains and permeates everything. God, man and subhuman beings live, move and have their being in it. The Spirit in man and the Spirit in the universe are not two, but one-identical in nature. That is the greatest discovery of Vedanta. Self-knowledge will, therefore compel us to recognize the dignity of life, to develop a reverential attitude toward the cosmos.

Higher culture is the fruit of good education. Self-knowledge, self-discipline and the training to develop individuality form the keynotes in Swamiji's scheme of education. Like Socrates and Plato, Swamiji gave maximum importance to education in developing our all-round faculties. But modern education does not lay stress on the all-sided progress of life. Hence, we see only a broken image of human life all-round. We depend on the politicians who handle power without character and the scientists who are concerned with knowledge without purpose. Even in the spiritual quest, we find people having faith without Truth. Lopsided development of the brain has done far greater harm to society. Good men- honest, broad minded, well-integrated whole men with spiritual moorings-are the crying need of the day. They alone can change the society through
their moral power. The crisis facing the world is not material poverty so much as the poverty of men of vision taking their bold stand on spirit with faith in themselves. Down the ages, the contribution of such men to human welfare and world stability has been far greater than that of so-called educated people having no faith in themselves. So Swamiji always and everywhere searched for “real men.” We do not find any moral values - the man making and character building - in secular education. Modern man is alienated from nature, from God, society and from himself. He is sick, embittered and weak. Hence, Swamiji tried to formulate an educational scheme based on spirituality which alone could give us strength dignity and manliness.

Swamiji’s luminous concept of man and his glorious future is most inspiring interesting, enlightening and fascinating in contrast with the very depressing picture of man in contemporary history. Swamiji’s concept of man and the universe is, in the words of Paul Deussen, “an inestimable value for the whole race of mankind.” The spiritual reservoir, a magazine of strength, is the panacea to our worst and fatal disease of self-hate which is so common today. This is the moist poisonous fruit of secular education, which is
completely bereft of the spiritual vision of life. Therefore, Swamiji has given so much importance to the role of the parent as well as the teachers who are responsible for awakening the latent spiritual dimension and qualities in children through the example and conviction of their life. The spirit of religion cannot be taught, but can be caught. Swamiji urged that utmost care be taken to impress upon the plastic minds of children the humane and moral values of life. The very attitude of seeking happiness outside himself rather than within himself has landed man in a serious crisis. In the modern age, man has mercilessly exploited nature, made this century the bloodiest of all, and poisoned the biosphere. He has gone to the moon and to the depths of the ocean in search of knowledge, but he has not sought to explore the depths of his own infinite soul.

All the ills of secularism can be rectified by turning the mind to the majestic realm of the spirit. That education is real which teaches us to develop strong faith in our own divinity. There can be no grander conception, nor a more impressive lesson for all educationists than the supreme message and teachings of Swamiji. His method of education has given to mankind a stronger incentive for living a heightened glorious life, a far wiser tolerance towards
fellowmen with love and sympathy, and a clear outlook upon the universe, finding unity behind diversity. Swamiji’s divine concept of man will grant us deeper satisfaction, greater joy and abiding peace.

As regards the caste system Swamiji points out that social groupings, which form the basis of Indian caste system, are found everywhere in the world, even in Europe. But there is a vital difference. In every other country, the highest honour belongs to the Kshatriya-the man of the sword. In India, the highest honour belongs to the man of peace-the Sharamana or the Brahmana, the man of God.

What Swamiji means is that the modern rigid system of caste distinctions, involving inequality, is very different from its old flexible form, and this transformation was the cause of the downfall of India. He also holds the priests responsible for it. It is in the books written by the priests that madnesses like that of caste are to be found; and not in books revealed from God. Then he continues:

But in spite of all the ravings of the priests, caste is simply a crystallized social institution, which, after doing its service, is now filling the atmosphere of India with stench; and it can only be removed by giving back
to the people their lost social individuality.

(Works V: 22-3)

He puts his finger on the evils of modern caste when he says that the idea of caste is the greatest dividing factor. Modern caste distinction is a barrier to India's progress. It narrows; restricts, separates! But then he hoped that it will crumble before the advancement of ideas. Signs are not wanting that his prophecy is on the way to fulfillment at no distant date. Swamiji did not recommend the total abolition of caste, but suggested its readjustment according to modern conditions, as would appear from the following passage:

From the time of the Upanishads down to the present day, nearly all our great Teachers have wanted to break through the barriers of caste, i.e., caste in its degenerated state, not the original system. What little good you see in the present caste clings to it from the original caste, which was the most glorious social institution.

(Centenary 376)

The fact is that he sought to revive the core and the essential spirit of Hinduism after rooting out the evil out-growths that practically killed it. He was a social thinker and reformer in his own
right. A unique nationalist, he wished to unite India with the force of religion and thus to ensure freedom for her. His scathing criticism of the Indian caste system and of the Indian educational system and his concern for the upliftment of women in India make him a social critic of the first order. His speeches constitute a rare document of social criticism.