CHAPTER IV

SWĀMY VIVEKĀNAṆDA AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

Very naturally, the philosophy of Swāmi VivekānaṆda is not an isolated phenomenon. The philosophy what we call of the Swamiji is an expression of his anubhava and jñāna, as it is the case of Indian wisdom where knowledge is ultimately experiential and this “anubhava/jñāna” of the Swāmiji is directly based on Indian philosophy, spirituality, knowledge etc is through the three fold stages of śravaṇa, manana and nidhiyadyāsana. To this count, we must know something about the life of this great master.

SWĀMI VIVEKĀNAṆDA

Swāmi VivekānaṆda’s name in pūrvasāhrama was Narendranath. He was born in Calcutta as the second son of Viswanath Dutta, a successful lawyer, and Bhuwanseswari Devi, a highly religious woman and a devotee of lord Śiva. They had in all ten Children-four sons and six daughters-five of whom died prematurely.

Naren’s boyhood was largely like that of any high-spirited vigorous and healthy young boy, but unlike other boys of his age however he was interested in meditation, which gave him a prodigious memory. His inborn quest for truth led him to almost all learned men of Calcutta, to whom he made earnest enquiries about God. This took him to Sri Ramakrishna
Paramahamsa. At that time Ramakrishna was a priest in the Temple of Dakshineswar. Naren asked the usual question to Sri Ramakrishna, “Sir, have you seen God?” The reply was a surprise to the Naren: “Yes, I see him, just as I see you, only in a much more intense sense”. This really impressed Naren, for, at long last he had found a man, who could say with surety that God exists and can be seen. Naren’s first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna took place in 1881, when he was an 18 year old college student. Naren found a kind of magnetism in Ramakrishna but it was after years of questioning and testing, which went of till the Guru’s last days that Naren finally became convinced of his Guru’s greatness. He became an initiated disciple, to whom Sri Ramakrishna imparted his spiritual realization and who he declared his heir.

There was a band of young men, mostly college students, who were attracted by the magnetic spell of Sri, Ramakrishna’s personality and Naren was the leader among them. After the passing away of the master, they all accepted ‘sanyas’ as directed by him and decided to carry on the mission entrusted to them by their master.

The India before Swāmiji was a land that had lost all erstwhile glory, it was a land ruled by aggressors from outside and a bunch of spiritually confused people. Time had treated this great nation very badly. Colonial British rule must end. Indians must organize and push the invaders out from the mother land. If this has to happen, then each Indian must first realize his own greatness through realizing the
Greatness, Culture, Religion Spirituality and even Epistemology of this land. Spirituality had always been the strength of this nation, which is rather dormant due to western begotary and influence. Vivekananda desired to kindle the dormant spiritual strength of Indians and fortify Indians to stand up to the British and ask them to quit. Further, one day not very far in the future, the entire world is going to look at India for spiritual solace and strength. We must have full potential to meet the demand from the world, then.

Deeply conscious of the mission he has to fulfill, Naren started on a pilgrimage. Without money or acquaintances, to see for himself the grand nation and its people, whom he was to serve. This led him all over India, from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari and brought him into close contact with people in every walk of life. In the words of Padmasri P. Parameswaran.

"He was deeply moved by the distress and degeneration that was prevalent all around, but history brought him memories of a great past, which now lay shattered!"

At last he reached Kanyakumari, where he spent three days and nights sitting on the now famous rock, the last piece of Indian land, wholly absorbed in one thought—that of his mission.

"With the vision of a seer, he understood why India had been thrown from the pinnacle of glory to the depths of degradation. Where only wind and surf were to be heard, he reflected on the purpose and achievements of the Indian world. He thought not of Bengal, or of Maharashtra, nor of the
Punjab but of India and the life of Indians. The centuries were laid out before him. He perceived the realities and potentialities of Indian culture. He saw India organically and synthetically as a master-builder might visualize in the concrete an architect's plan. He saw religion to be the life blood of India's mission. 'India', he realized, in the silence of his heart, 'shall rise only through a renewal and restoration of that highest spiritual consciousness, that has made her, at all times, the cradle of nations and cradle of faith. He saw her greatness; he saw her weakness as well, the central one of which was that the nation had lost its individuality. To his mind, the only hope lay in a re-statement of the culture of rishis. Religion was not the cause of India's downfall; but the fact is that true religion was nowhere followed; for religion, when lived, was the most potent of all forces."

It was during the course of his 'Parivrajaka' life that he heard of Parliament of Religions to be held at Chicago and decided to go there. The intention of the organizers of the Parliament was to establish the superiority of the Christianity before the world. But the presence of Swamiji spoiled their attempt. In the words of Padmasri P. Parameswaran,

"They wanted it to be an occasion at which it would be proclaimed to the whole world that Christianity was the only true religion and humanity's salvation lay in the Christian path. But the providential appearance of Vivekananda opened the closed minds of many Westerners to the light from the 'land of the heathen', which had the potential to lead the world to a harmony of religions, and not to the exclusive superiority of any one".

In the Parliament of Religions, Vivēkānanda emerged as the most distinguished and popular speaker. The famous "Chicago Address" enshrined the essence of his message to the world. The "Chicago
address" gave him the opening, which the Swāmīji wanted. He became a world figure. But success did not dazzle him. It made him painfully aware of the great misery in which the people of India lived, compared with the freedom and affluence in the West. He traveled extensively in America and also undertook a tour of England.

Through Vivēkānanda, for the first time many Europeans got a different spiritual experience. Many wanted to convert into Hindu religion but he forbid them, and asked them to be good Christians. Many Europeans shamed themselves in the foolishness of sending Christian missionaries to a land like India. They saw a Hindu and so an Indian.

After spending nearly four years in the west he has decided to return to India. The desire to return to India in his own words is:

"India I loved before I came away; now the very dust of India has become holy to me; it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Theertha"4

Swāmīji landed in Colombo on 5th January, 1897. The story of his success in the West had reached India much earlier. A hero's welcome awaited him all over India. Everywhere vast crowds, comprising mostly youth, thronged to see and hear him. Through his electrifying lecturers, he raised his countrymen with an urgent sense of duty to the country and its religion.

"He exerted them to lead a life of dedication and sacrifice. He aroused in them a fiery sense of pride in Hinduism, to which he gave a timely interpretation and added a new dimension."5
The impact was miraculous. To consolidate his and his followers' activities, Vivekānanda founded Sri Ramakrishna Math and Sri Ramakrishna Mission. The objectives he placed before the two organizations was characteristic of him. Till then sanyāsīs had only one role to play: pursue the path of God and teach people how to do the same; in accordance with their station in life. Vivekananda realized that this was not enough for the present age. He placed the objective of ‘Ātmāno Mokṣhartham, Jagat Hithaya cha’ (for the salvation of the self and for the welfare of Humanity). Service to humanity, according to him was to be considered equal to the worship of God. Thus he added a new dimension to the age-old institution of Sanyāsa. Vivekānanda also established two journals to spread the message of Neo-vedāntism—Prabudha Bhārath in English and Udbhodhan in Bengali. After setting his work in India in order, he once again toured the West and satisfied himself that the movement was taking strong roots.

By this time he become ill due to the continuous hard work and at the early age of 39 he quietly passed away in the mission headquarters at Belur, on 4th July, 1902, meditating, as Yogis do. A few hours before his samādhi, he was heard saying to himself.

“If there were another Vivekānanda, he would have known what Vivekānanda has done. And yet how many more Vivekānandas shall be born in time.”

To the common man Swāmīji is first and foremost an exponent of Vedanta and nothing else. But he should not be regarded exclusively as a religious prophet. His individuality and thought are too complex to be measured by any classification. The chief occupation of his life was religion. But he made significant observations on every aspect of life. As a neo-vedantin he did not differentiate the sacred life from the secular affairs and he did give equal importance to the secular matters also. Sister Nivedita in her introduction to the Complete Works of Swāmi Vivekananda explains this unity of life thus.

"If the many and the one be indeed the same reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are parts of realization, no distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray, To conquer is to renounce, Life itself is religion".

The Complete Works of Swāmi Vivekananda, which contain various strands of thought, provide as the glimpses of his philosophical ideals. His philosophy is based on spiritualism. For example, he interpreted history in terms of spiritualism. His concept of freedom which is all inclusive is spiritualistic. His ideal of equality stands for gradual growth of individual, his philosophy or nationalism, his views on democracy, anarchism, internationalism are all based on spiritualism. The philosophy of Swāmi Vivekananda was moulded to some extent by his social background, but mainly by India’s spiritual lore. His social upbringing revealed to him the environmental weakness of India, like
social authoritarianism and exclusiveness In his opinion religious orthodoxy too had suffocated the growth of society. He was therefore determined to improve the social and political environment of India by liberally interpreting the Indian Scriptural ideas.

**Formative Influences**

The liberal family atmosphere played a major role in shaping the personality and philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. His bother Bhupendranath Dutta, in his book 'Swami Vivekananda Patriot, Prophet' speaks about this atmosphere.

"The writer is proud of his family's liberal outlook. As Karl Marx said, that he was thankful to his father for bringing him out of Jewish ghetto outlook, the writer is thankful to the elders of his family for creating an intellectual and social liberal outlook of life rather than rooting in medieval quagmire, which indirectly is a creation of long-drawn foreign rule under which the Hindus lived."

In the words of Swāmi Nikhilānanda

"The liberal atmosphere provided by his father, along with the self-confidence that he instilled in his son, enabled Narendranath, in his future chequered career, to preserve his serenity of mind, whether dwelling with princes or sharing the straw huts of beggars."

At home, he became the heir of two different cultures; the Eastern and Western. He imbibed his mother Bhuvaneswari Devi's religious outlook and his father 'Biswanath Dutta's appreciation of social and liberal outlook.
"Biswanath was a liberal Indian with a synthetic mind. That is the reason why his offsprings became 'radicals' in ways of thinking. Swami Vivekananda was a product of social environment."1)

The study of European philosophy widened the horizon of Vivekananda's rational outlook. While he was a student of the Presidency college Narendranath had acquired a degree of Western knowledge that set him far above the level of other students and gave him the intellectual foundations which stood him in such good stead when he went on his conquering pilgrimage of the western hemisphere. He had mastered western logic, western philosophy and ancient and modern history of different European nations even during the first two years of his collegiate carrier. The philosophies of Herbert Spencer, the three Critics from Immanuel Kant, positivism of Auguste Comte, John Stuart Mill and his three essays on religion, David Hume's Skepticism as an overstretching of British empiricism etc, all came within his reading spree, giving him the scepticism towards authority and the faith in pure reason which enabled him in later years to meet Western thinkers on their own ground when he began introducing them to the treasures of Veda\n\nAbout the various psychological and social factors that have contributed to Swamiji's personality, V.K.R.V Rao says:

"This combination of reforming zeal, militant patriotism and defensive pride in India's religious and cultural heritage, was to attend the growth of the national movement in India during the entire 19th century. It was in this
environment of compendium of religious reform and patriotism that
Vivekananda was born and brought up"11

An Indian who is conscious of India's heritage, culture and
philosophy is naturally proud of religion and spirituality. How could such a
person not be a patriot and nationalist? The circumstances were such
that a conscious Indian wouldn't lie down waiting; he would act and
perform himself.

Widespread poverty in India, mainly due to the colonial rule also
influenced Swamiji deeply.

"Similarly, India's economic impoverishment, the decline and
pauperisation of Indian artisans and craftsmen, and the proletarianisation
of the peasants as a result of colonial exploitation, had left a deep impact
on Swami Vivekananda. Famines were a recurring feature of the period
and used to take a heavy toll of human lives. The increasing
impoverishment of the masses naturally disturbed the sensitive and
patriotic minds which were slowly becoming more politically conscious.
They began to find economic reasons, besides national pride, in seeking
the liberation of the country from the foreign rule. This ubiquitous poverty
was to make a profound impression on Vivekananda who later coined the
expression 'Daridra-Narahayana' and saw the worship of God in the service
of the poor"12.

He became a member of the Sadharan Brahmasamaj. He looked at
society from the rational point of view and denounced the social and
religious weakness of India. But he was not satisfied with the activities of
Sadharan Brahmasamaj. In the words of A.V. Ratna Reddy.
“But he found no solace in the intellectual dryness of the samaj and marched into the spiritual abode of Sri Ramakrishna”

Vivekānanda rightly realized that if anything could be done with Indian society, it can only be through the spiritual awakening of Indian minds. Spiritual and religious strengthening can only fortify Indian minds.

The single biggest influence on the life of Naren was that of Sri Rāma Krishṇa Paramahamsa, whom he calls, ‘My teacher, my master, my ideal, my God in life’.

“The result of the contact of these two great personalities, Sri Rāmakrishṇa and Narendranath, was Swāmi Vivekānanda who was to become the heart of New India, with the ancient spiritual perspective heightened, widened and strengthened to include modern learning — old ideas assimilating the new. The intense activity of the west was to be combined with the deep meditation of the east. Asceticism and retirement were to be supplemented by work and service to others. From the merging of these two currents came Neo-Hinduism, the faith of a glorious Tomorrow, in which all should be fulfilment and nothing denial.”

Let me call it as the unification of thought into action, the communion of the actual and ideal, borrowing the western term. I see this aspect of Swāmi Vivekānanda as “The contribution”. The Indian Spirituality that had got rusted in texts, temples and in the minds of few socially aloof scholars are now being put into action that makes the culture and spirituality itself vibrant which in turn made the Indians vibrant, who would rise against the short sighted British colonial rulers with vivacity and strength.
In the words of Swamiji:

"If there had been anything achieved by me by my thoughts, or words or deeds, if from my lips has ever fallen one word that has helped anyone in the world, I lay no claim to it, it was his (Sri Ramakrishna's)".15

This seems most natural to me, Swāmījī laying no claim of what he is, what he had said and done. It is natural in the magnitude of a Śrīvīśnu to attribute all his achievement to his Guru; and Swamiji too was just doing the same. Undoubtedly Paramahamsa was instrumental in creating a Swāmī Vivekānanda out of Narendra Dutta, and I had often heard people of the Mutt calling Paramahaṃsa ‘the spiritual’ and Vivekānanda the ‘intellectual’.

Thus, diversities found union and expression in Vivekānanda, which is due to his inherent ability to combine diverse social influences of various level.

In the words of Ratna Reddy

"Vivekānanda supplemented the religious teachings of his mother with his father’s appreciation of the Western values and the rationalism of the Brahmaśāmaja with spiritualism of Śrī Rāmakrishna.”16

Vivekānanda’s sojourn in the West also broadened his social and political outlook. He admired their social equality and encouragement of the individual initiative and freedom. He appreciated their organizational ability and efficiency and knowledge of science. His comparative study of the western society and India revealed to him the spiritual poverty of the
west and environmental weakness of India. He noticed that Europe ignored organism whereas India ignored environment.

"Therefore he envisaged synthesis of science and religion, organism and environment. He stood for mutual exchange of spiritual knowledge of the East and scientific knowledge of the West."\(^1\)

Perhaps synthesizing is the peculiarity with Indian Metaphysics, digging out a unity out of the divergent many, thus creating a synthetic unity of the whole. This perhaps is the most striking difference between popular Western thinking, when they look at the differences, we search for unity. Both may be even equally important in phenomenal world, but then look at what differences such different perspectives make to human existence!

In the words of Swāmi Raṅganathānanda

"He had assimilated in his own personality the manlieness of the West and the saintliness of the East. He saw clearly the excellence and limitations of each of these two human legacies which he embraced as two integral element of a total human culture and proclaimed the modern age as the era of their synthesis."\(^1\)

Vivēkānanda's study of the East and West made it clear to him that each individual and community must seek its growth according to its own nature and individuality. He clearly advocates that whatever one may do, spiritualism ought to be the end, the goal, the desideratum. Thus all thoughts and the activities ought to have their orientation of spiritualism as the end. Everything else are only means to this one end.
"Our Life-blood is spirituality if it flows clear, if it flows strong and pure and vigorous, everything is right; political, social and other material defects, even the poverty of the land, will all be cured if that blood is pure."\(^1\)

He had rightly identified spirituality as the basis of all human activities: be it political, social or whatever it may be. The same is indirectly said by the *Purushārthās* also. Among the four values of the *Purushārthās*, viz. *Dharma, Artha, Kāma* and *Mokṣa*, *Dharma* is fundamental and it must have its bearing on every other values. *Dharma* is indeed akin to spirituality.

Summarizing the formative influences that went into the making of Swāmi Vivēkānanda, Swāmi Rāganathānanda says:

"There was, first, his mastery of Sanskrit language and through it, of the philosophical and spiritual legacy of India's hoary cultural past; secondly, there was his mastery of the English language and through it, of the scientific, artistic and social thought of the modern West; thirdly, his five years discipleship under Śrī Rāmakrīṣṭha Paramahamsa, the most outstanding spiritual teacher of 19th century India, in whose extra ordinary life and realizations, vivēkānanda found verifications of India's age-old spiritual legacy, and its close kinship with the cultural legacy of the modern West; and fourthly, his intimate knowledge of the India of his time, gained from his journeys, Mostly on foot across the length and breadth of India."\(^2\)
Metaphysical Foundations

The metaphysical ideas of Swāmi Vivēkānanda are derived from the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gītā and also from Śrī Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Sāṅkya Philosophy, mainly.

“The impact of Vēdās was evident on his rational and liberal outlook. The Upanishāds taught him the purity of human nature and the cult of strength, physical and spiritual. He owed much to the Bhagavad Gītā for his technique of activity and the theory of resistance. Vēdānta encouraged him to proclaim the inalienability of individual freedom and espouse human equality and Unity. His master Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa helped him herald the Neo-Vēdānta movement, which is also called practical Vēdānta. From the Sāṅkhya theory of cause and effect he drew that ends and means are inseparable and derived that social evolution was cyclical.”

He hoped to make the Indian society dynamic by liberal interpretation of her spiritual values. Accordingly he derived his philosophical ideas from them.

The Vēdās

Vivēkānanda wanted to mould the social life of India on the basis of India’s sacred texts. By the Vēdās Vivēkānanda meant knowledge, which is eternal and infinite. According to Swāmiji all knowledge is Vēdās, infinite as God is infinite.

He was of the view that the knowledge of the Vēdās is supreme and absolute. In case of conflict between Vēdās and other sacred books on any issue, he regarded the Vēdās as authority.
"With the exception of the Vēdaś every book must change. The authority of the Vēdaś is supreme for all time to come; the authority of every one of our other books is for the time being."22

Vivekananda as an orthodox defender of the Vēdaś regarded them as eternal and sacred. However, unlike the religious orthodoxical section, Vivekananda held the view that the Vēdaś are not the last words on revelation.

"The Bible, the Vēdas, the Koran and all other sacred books are but so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded."23

Vivēkānanaṇḍa felt that the spiritual unity of India could be maintained easily and spontaneously by accepting the Vēdaś as the common source and inspiration for all. He pointed out that even Budhism and Jainism did not condemn the knowledge portion of the Vēdaś, but they only repudiated the deformities and abominable practices of the Vēdic religion Vivēkānanaṇḍa objected the use of the word Hindu, for it was only a geographical name coined by the aliens.

"He wanted the Hindus to be called as Vaidikāś, followers of the Vēdaś."24

He also preferred the name 'Vēdic religion' for 'Hinduism'. Thus to Vivēkānanaṇḍa the common religious denomination would preserve and foster the spiritual unity of India.
Vivēkānaṇḍa, despite his regard for eternal knowledge of the Vedas, was not swayed by them.

"Though as a prophet he humbly submitted to the Vedas, exhumed the buried truths and scattered them widely, yet as a philosopher he brooded over independently and refused to accept anything as sacrosanct".25

He depended on reason and stood for conditional acceptance of the Vēdās.

"Personally, I take as much of the Vēdās as agree with reason"26

Between blind faith and reason, he followed reason. He was strongly opposed to religious fanaticism and dogmatism.

"He hated dogmatic thinking and wanted to dehypnotise the people from religious dogma, myth and superstition. His whole life was a ceaseless battle against them. He was of the view that in course of time these outward forms of religions suppress truth. Therefore he advised the individual and the community to avoid book-worship and follow reason in interpreting the sacred texts."27

Vivēkānaṇḍa’s assumption and insistence on rational attitude towards the Vēdās paved the way for expansion of his liberal outlook.

"It was as a liberal that he wanted to ransack the knowledge of the Vēdās with the light of the reason"28

In the words of Swāmījī

"The proof of religion depends on the truth of the constitution of man, and not on any books. These books are the outgoings, the effects of man’s constitution; and man made these books. We are yet to see the books that
made man. Reason is equally an effect of that common cause, the
constitution of man, where our appeals must be."[3]

**Upaniṣṭ̄ads**

The mental make-up of Vivēkānanda was quite in consonance with
the philosophy of the Upaniṣṭ̄ads

"Vivēkānanda felt more at home with the Upaniṣṭ̄ads than with the Vēdaś, for
the Upaniṣṭ̄ads gave importance to Jnana and subordinated Karma to it"[3]

Vivēkānanda wanted to disseminate the spiritual truths as the
common possession of all, including the pariah and the down-trodden. He
exhorted his countrymen

"Go back to your Upaniṣṭ̄ads- the shining, the strengthening, the bright
philosophy and part form all these mysterious things, all these weakening
things. Take up this philosophy; the greatest truths are simplest things in
the world, simple as your own existence. The truths of Upaniṣṭ̄ads are
before you. Take them up, live up to them, and salvation of India will be at
hand"[3]

Undoubtedly, Vivēkānanda realized how Upaniṣṭ̄ads came to be
called as Vēdaṇṭa. He realized Vēdaś -and Vēdaṇṭas, the Upaniṣṭ̄ads. The
Metaphysics of Upaniṣṭ̄ads had created such lasting influence on him, that
he was more thrilled than amazed by the principle of unity of ‘Ātman’ and
‘Brahmaṇ’. Ātman, the self is one with Brahmaṇ, the ultimate reality. The
difference is only maya or illusion, and the feeling of difference is due to
‘avidya’ or ignorance. Ignorance or avidya creates a cloud of smoke,
making Ātman and Brahmaṇ apparently separate. Ignorance here means,
ignorance about the true nature of self or Ātman as Brahma itself in reality. A Guru imparts this realization through the expression ‘Tat-tvam-asi’, meaning ‘thou art that’. A realized student would then meditate on ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ meaning I am ‘Brahman’, this is best exemplified in the Śanti Mantra’ as follows:

"Pūrṇamadā Pūrṇamidam
Pūrṇat Pūrṇamudacyate
Pūrṇasya Pūrṇamādaya
Pūrṇamāvā Vasisyate"

The Brahma is pūrṇa, a complete whole. From Brahma the complete whole comes Ātman which is also a complete whole. The separation of this complete whole is logically inconceivable from the complete whole, because complete whole by definition and nature shall be complete whole only. Thus the separation is Māya or illusion and Ātman in reality is Brahma itself. This makes human mind free and powerful and also that man is essentially divine. Such status the Upanishāds carry.

"The Upanishāds are the Magna Carta of human rights"

The Swamiji must have been influenced Kōśa theory of evolution in the Upanishāds, that makes a hierarchy of conscious such as Annamaya kōśa, Prāṇamaya kōśa, Manomaya kōśa, Vijñānāmaya kōśa and ultimately Anātman Maya kōśa, the transcendental. Man too can reach the
transcendental level of perfection, as the essential nature of man is transcendental. For Swāmiji the Semitic concept of Cardinal sin and all human beings as inheritants of cardinal sin was an anachronistic concept and he lashed the concept of sin as:

"A standing libel on human nature"  

He reiterated.

"The one great idea that seems to be clear, and comes out through masses of superstition in every country and in every religion, is the one luminous idea that man is divine, that divinity is our nature".

Vivekānānda avoided any sectarian outlook of man. According to him the individual must enjoy the earthly life and then renounce it for higher idea.

In the words of Swāmi Rāganāthaṇḍa

"Thus viewing man integrally in his physical, social and trans-social dimensions, and with a view to ensuring his total fulfilment, Vivekananda expands a philosophy of man in which man, whether eastern or western, can feel at home and find the inspiration to achieve total life fulfillment."

Vivekānānda postulated his concept of freedom on the divinity of the individual. The Upanishādic concept of divinity of human nature is inseparable from the eternity of individual freedom. As man is divine, freedom is his natural right. Vivekānānda held that freedom is all-inclusive.
"Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom and spiritual freedom are the watch word of the Upanishads."

He made it clear that freedom ensures growth. No individual and community can make progress without freedom. Vivēkānanda affirmed that the world is also real and supported selfless activity. To ensure freedom, the individual must perform *karma* and serve selflessly. Freedom includes service. Only a free individual can fulfill his obligations to society and become perfect. An individual fulfills his obligations to society and becomes perfect. Thus the individual freedom consists in performing selfless activity to society. Freedom is selfless activity and activity strengthens individual and social life.

Vivēkānanda derived the concept of strength from the Upanishadic ideal of impersonal self. The impersonal self is free from fear and weakness. The individual, who is of infinite energy and strength, can never be weak. Vivēkānanda revolted against individual fear and weakness. He lashed at weakness because it would develop individual degeneration, slavery, misery and hinder freedom and spontaneous growth. He wanted the individual not to think of his weakness but of strength. He pointed out that remedy for weakness is strength.

"Thus I lay down as the first essential in all I teach: anything that brings spiritual, mental, or physical weakness, touch it not with the toes of your feet."
Vivekānanda’s concept of strength promotes individual freedom and morality. In the words of Swami Athulānanda, Vivekānanda, wanted the kind of strength:

“That leads to the conscientious performance of Dharma, be it in social functions or in a life of withdrawal from worldly affairs”.

A religion that is erected on the fear of ‘Gods wrath’, fear of ‘Cardinal Sin’ etc can never make human being strong internally to exist authentically. The ideas of ‘fear and trembling’ are hegemonic. One must remember here that in the context of Swamiji, Christian missionary work of converting Hindus were making deft and definite progress, and this converting activities were also sponsored and abetted by the colonial rulers. They knew very well that spreading of Christianity would be strongly instrumental in strengthened and lengthened colonial rule.

**Bhagavad Gīta**

Bhagavad Gīta exerted a considerable influence on the Philosophy of Swami Vivekānanda. Social life in India was degenerated and immobile. Vivekānanda perceived that India could be awakened socially and politically only by the ceaseless selfless activity as conceived in the Bhagavad Gīta. By interpreting the Gīta in terms of social activity, Vivekānanda gave a social content to religion. Vivekānanda regarded activity as an end in itself. Activity encourages the individual initiative and freedom. The individual works according to his nature and serves society according to his ability. Therefore the selfless work of every individual is
sacred and equal. Selfless activity uplifts the individual from his lower ego. He would cultivate an identical outlook with the members of the society. Thus selfless activity inculcates the spirit of social equality and promotes social good and unity. The importance of *Karma* that too *Nîshkâma Karma* in reconstruction of Indian nation can never be exhausted. It was significant yesterday, it is significant today and will also be significant in the days to come. The Bhagavad Gîta is packed with such action plans, that we only have to learn, understand and follow it.

**Vedanta**

Vivekânañda held high the ideal of *Vedanta*. He made it the basis for all walks of life. The higher the ideal, the greater would be the individual and society.

"I will ask you to understand that Vedanta, though it is intensely practical, is always so in the sense of the ideal. It does not preach an impossible ideal, however high it be, and it is high enough for an idea"38

*Vedanta* reconciles the actual to the ideal. It stands for truth, social harmony and universal oneness. It inculcates the spirit of selfless service and mutual co-operation among individuals. It makes individuals obsessed with freedom and equality. Vivekânañda's supreme faith in *Vedanta* led him to profess (1) harmony between the individual and social life (2) freedom of each individual and nation (3) human equality, and (4) human unity.40
**Vedānta** is based on the principle of unity. Vedāntic unity postulates the interdependence of life. Life is not solitary and poor but social and spiritual. Therefore the individual life is inseparable from social life. Interdependence of life eliminates mutual hatred and friction and social differences. As **Vedānta** makes no difference between the one and the many, in this case individual and society, it emphasizes that mutual good relations are to be based on equality of rights and opportunities. Equality of relations among the individuals promotes social growth and unity. Thus Vivēkānanda's **Vedānta** resolves

"The conflict not only between Paramārtha and Vyāvahara, but between individual and society as well"\(^{41}\).

Vivēkānanda believed that

"Human relations can thus be made divine"\(^{42}\).

The object of the individual and society is the same, namely, mutual growth, harmony and perfection. As a matter of fact, the individual ensures his growth by serving society.

The Vedāntic concept of freedom is inseparable from the Vedāntic concept of individual. According to Vivēkānanda, "Man is divine"\(^{43}\). Divinity is natural and inherent birthright of the individual. The right of divinity includes other rights like the right to freedom and equality. Vedanta recognizes freedom not only as an inherent right of the individual, but also accepts right to equality. As all individuals are parts of the Absolute, all
are equal. The right to equality stands for the abolition of privileges. Thus he pleaded for equality of human beings and condemned all kinds of privileges which perpetuate inequality in society.

The Vēdāntic concept of equality paves the way for the unity of all human beings.

"We are one-mentally, physically and spiritually. It is wrong to say that we are even physically different." 44

Human equality fosters human brotherhood. He believed that universal brotherhood should merge in universal selfgood. Therefore.

"Brotherhood should be superseded by Universal selfgood" 45

The Vēdāntic concept of equality, which stands for the abolition of privileges between man and man, led Vivēkānanda to advocate for the abolition of privileges and barriers, racial or social or national. He felt that perpetuation of national inequalities and privileges were fatal to international unity. Therefore he pleaded for their abolition.

"He emphasized that the Vēdāntic concept of unity should be put into practice and in this emphasis is found the influence of his master Sri Rāmakrishṇa, who moulded Vēdānta into Neo Vēdānta." 46

The essential oneness of human being and man in nature itself became luminant from the Upaniṣāḍs. He was trying to apply this principle very intensely to create a spirituality based social order as Plato attempted in his creation of Utopia. If some political scientist feel that
Utopia is not practical then, I feel that it is not the fault of Platonic theory, but a failure on the part of others to put the theory into practice.

**Sri Rāmakṛishṇa Paramahamsa**

Of all the influences that moulded Vivēkānanda, the foremost was that of his master Śrī Rāma Krishna. Vivēkānanda, despite the exuberance of his intellectual richness, humbly admitted that every word he uttered was that of his masters. Though he disclaimed anything of his own, he maintained his independent thinking in interpreting and developing his master’s thought.

The position that of Swāmiji at this is very instructive, especially to empirical scholars of modernism. One can draw a distinction between intellectual knowledge and spiritual knowledge at this point. Undoubtedly Vivēkānanda’s intellectual ‘cognitive’ knowledge was far ahead and superior to that of the Paramahamsa: but then we find the intellectual superiority of Vivēkānanda humbling before the spiritual Paramahamsa. Indeed, this ought to be a lesson to researchers and scholars of social sciences, where intellectual cognitivity, amassing as well as analysis of massive data with empirical tools, alone can very well end up in creating intellectual monsters who fail to cater the spirit of what they gather by way of knowing what they call ‘cognitive reality’. To my mind, such intellectual monsters, when they turns anarchists becomes not only a problem to themselves, but also to the society and the nation itself. In case of Swami Vivēkānanda, his intellectual ability was supplemented by the spirituality
of his Guru and that made the entire world to take lessons from him. Intellect alone-minus spirituality- ends up creating intellectual monsters - Bhamśurāsa or Frankinstin's. But in the words Mukerjee S.L.

"Vivekānanda shines more in his own light than in the glory of Rāmakrishṇa"47

According to Vivekānanda, Rāmakrishṇa's concepts of (1) Neo-Vēḍānta, (2) Jīva is Śiva and (3) Emphasis on the means required rational interpretations.

**Neo – Vēḍānta**

"Rāmakrishna laid the basis of Neo-Vēḍānta and Vivekānanda build its superstructure"48

They both emphasized the practical nature of Vedanta.

"Neo-Vēḍāntism is a re-establishment and re-statement, reconstruction and re-valuation, reorientation and reinterpretation of Advaita Vēḍānta of Sankara with modern arguments, in modern language, suited to modern man, adjusting itself with all the modern challenges"49

Ramakrishna and Vivekananda gave equal importance to the Shakti aspect of Brahmay in the Universe. They held that the world is not illusory but real. It is also a manifestation of Brahmay. Neo-Vēḍānta makes no difference between the sacred and secular life. As world is Brahmay, worldly activity too is sacred and all selfless work is worship. Therefore, selfless activity is not only social but also spiritual. As long as man lives in the world, he must perform worldly activity, with the spirit of detachment.
"This Neo-Vedanta encourages individual freedom and selfless activity on the part of the individual, and social equality and oneness in the society."

Here it is clear that both Swamiji and his group were attempting to some kind of synthetic unity mainly of Saikara Vedanta and Ramanauja Vedanta. This attempt for a synthetic unity was not for any metaphysical reasons. Evidently, such efforts were for practical reasons. Vedanta in its nirguna form shall not make an impact on the majority, as Vishiadvaita would do. Fundamentally the Swamiji wanted Vedantas to affect people, so that their spirituality becomes vitalized and they become strong from within to fight against and oust the foreign rulers who were out to destroy Indian mental strength to continue subjugation. Thus, Neo-Vedanta and all such interpretations were put in to practice for all practical purposes and certainly not with any philosophical design and end. This indeed had greatly contributed to the integration of Indian nation.

Jiva is Siva

Neo Vedanta visualizes divinity in every walk of life. It reminds man that he is the spirit. Ramakrishna’s expression of ‘Jiva is Siva’ is a practical realization of the spirit in man. His utterance of ‘Jiva is Siva’ was at once a revelation to Vivekananda. Vivekananda interpreted that individual is not only to be served but must also be worshiped, for he is not different from God. He identified himself with the masses to serve and worship them.
"For him, Karma is not divorced from Jñāna and Bhakti but is the medium through which Jnana and Bhakti are expressed."5

He made the concept of ‘Jīva is Śiva’ the socio economic programme of the Ramakrishna Mission and monastery for the upliftment and liberation of the masses.

**Importance of Means**

Rāmakṛishṇa’s ‘Jīva is Śiva’ serves as a means for the individual to purify his self to identify himself with the community. He believed that every individual could make progress by following his own faith. Sri Rāmakṛishṇa’s concept of this is reflected in the thought and activity of Vivēkānanda. In the words of Swāmiji’.

“One of the greatest lessons I have learned in my life is to pay as much attention to the means of work as to its end. He (Sri Rāmakṛishṇa) was a great man from whom I have learned it, and his whole life was a practical demonstration of this great principle”57

Vivēkānanda believed that individual and social growth depended on the means pursued. The individual growth is impossible, when ends and means are separated: Vivēkānanda’s realization of the purity of means made it easier for him to visualize that ends and means were inseparable. Obviously neglecting means in the belief that ‘end will justify means’ is indeed ‘Kirāta Dharma’. A person in the path of spirituality will never be able to do it. Means must be righteous and Dharmic. In a word, every thing must have complete bearing of Dharma. This idea of the
Swamiji is extremely practical and needed today for the meaningful and amicable co-existence of our societies. Materialistic inclinations creates tenets in the young minds to realize ends through any means. Such tendencies promotes selfishness, egocentricism and would end up creating individuals living in water tight compartments. This eventually leads to disintegration of nation, society and individual themselves. The warning, *Dharma* ought to bear upon means goes a long way in National integration.

**Saṅkhya**

Vivekānanda’s concept of equality, theory of cause and effect and the technique of activity were drawn from the Saṅkhya philosophy. Vivekānanda’s concept of equality is based on the Saṅkhya analysis of human nature, which consists of three elements, namely, *Satva, Rajas*, and *Tamas*. One element, dominates other elements in every individual life. The natural difference or inequality between man and man is due to the degree of manifestation of these *Gunas* in their thought and activity. Vivekananda, on the basis of Sankhya analysis of human nature, believed that human inequality is natural and creative. The individual can improve his growth by manifesting the finer form of *Guna*. Therefore, human inequality is not eternal. As he believed in the individual growth, he advocated the levelling up of individuals. As human nature is composed of three elements all are basically equal.
Vivekānanda’s concept of human relations in society and the technique of activity were based on Sāṅkya theory of cause and effect. He held the view that cause and effect are not separate and distinct but one and the same in a different form.

“That the manifested or the grosser state is the effect, and the finer state the cause. Thousands of years ago, it was demonstrated by Kapila, the great father of all philosophy, that destruction means going back to the cause.”53

As cause and effect were not contradictory to him, he held that the human relations in society were based on unity. As the individual is the cause and society the effect, all are equal and one in society and their social interests are identical. Unity of cause and effect postulates social unity. Therefore there is no eternal hostility between man and man, caste and caste, man and society.

Vivekānanda devised the technique of activity to improve individual and social life depending on the means to be pursued. Means is as important as ends. It is on the basis of unity of cause and effect that Vivekānanda regarded ends and means as inseparable either in individual or in social life. Ends and means are instrumental in solving social problems.

“First find out the cause, then remove it, and the effect will be removed also”54
Individual ignorance is the cause, and the effect is enslavement. Ignorance could be dispelled by imparting education, sacred and spiritual, to individual.

Vivekānanda's concept of History is based on Sāṅkhya Philosophy. The Sāṅkhya evolution of rise and fall of the universe guided Vivekānanda in formulating his concept of history and the cyclical rule of for castes: Brāhmin, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra successively.

**Philosophy of Freedom**

Vivekānanda's concept of freedom is spiritualistic. The impact of *Upanishāds* is evident on Vivekānanda's concept of freedom. He was passionately attached to the Upanishādic ideal of freedom. The seers of *Upanishāds* made a deep study of the nature of freedom. They realized that the universe rises in freedom, rests in freedom and melts away in freedom. According to Pandit Nehru.

"........ the authors of Upanishāds were passionately attached to the idea of freedom and wanted to see everything in terms of it. Swāmi Vivekānanda was always emphasizing this aspect."55

Sister Nivedita rightly pointed out that following the Upanishadic tradition,

"He (Vivekānanda) preached Mukti instead of heaven, enlightenment instead of salvation"56

Mōkṣa or liberalisation is a concept which is distinct from both 'Atonement' and 'Salvation'. The essential difference is this; Mōkṣa
(Hinduism) Kaivalya (Jainism) and Nirvāṇa (Buddhism) are attained through individual's efforts alone, whereas atonement, salvation etc are given through the grace of God. Individual alone can never attained them. A comparison here shows the highest of all freedom for the human beings are with the Upaniṣhādīc tradition.

Vivekānanda's concept of freedom is all inclusive. It includes spiritual freedom, individual freedom, social freedom, and economic freedom. He pleaded for a synthesis of individual and social freedom as well as material and spiritual freedom.

Vivekānanda considered freedom as an inherent spiritual necessity for all forms of life, sentient, or insentient.

"Wherever there is life, there is this search for freedom and that freedom is the same as God. Necessarily this freedom gives us mastery over all nature and is impossible without Knowledge."57

According to Vivekānanda freedom is a product of struggle between the internal life and external nature.

"Everything that we perceive around us is struggling towards freedom, from the atom to man. From the insentient, lifeless particle of matter to the highest existence on earth, the human soul. The whole universe is in fact the result of this struggle for freedom."58

Vivekānanda held freedom to be absolute and infinite, changeless and qualityless, self-existent and immanent. This absolute freedom is to
be embodied by the individual. Vivekānanda considered freedom indispensable for the spiritual growth of the individual. According to Swāmīji, freedom is not a contrivance of society but an inherent possession of the individual. The spiritual nature of freedom constrained Vivekānanda to deny determinism of any kind on the individual freedom. Therefore as freedom is absolute, Vivekānanda condemned the containment of freedom on any basis. He pointed out that even on grounds of Advaita:

"This denial of freedom is no explanation; on the other hand why not say that the idea of necessity or bondage or custom is an illusion of the ignorant."59

To Vivekānanda, freedom is not only a biological necessity but also a spiritual ingredient of life. His spiritualistic concept of freedom rules out the competitive freedom among individuals and stands for altruism. This concept of freedom inculcates the individuals identity with society and it encourages the growth and freedom of all individuals. Belief in spiritual freedom made Vivekānanda assert that individual freedom is no threat to social freedom.

"When human beings are most clearly aware, most awake, they feel, that in some sense which cannot be clearly articulated, they are instruments for the expression of the spirit, 'Vessels' of the spirit. When he realizes this, we out grow individualism and espouse the cause of our fellow-men because we and our fellow-men are the expression of the same spirit."60
Individual Freedom

Vivekananda wanted to make freedom as the natural possession of all individuals. He defined his concept of individual freedom as follows:

"Liberty does not clearly mean the absence of obstacles in the path of misappropriation of wealth etc, by you and me, but it is our natural right to be allowed to use our own body, intelligence, or wealth according to our will, without doing any harm to others."

Vivekananda further says:

"Freedom is the watchword. Be free! A free body, a free mind, and a free soul! That is what I have felt all my Life! I would rather be doing evil freely than be doing good under bondage."

Vivekananda opposed any kind of intervention in individual freedom. He believed that individual growth can never be achieved by the external pressure or intervention.

"The idea that you can make others grow and help their growth, that you can direct and guide them, always retaining for yourself the freedom of the teacher, is nonsense, a dangerous lie which has retarded the growth of millions and millions of human beings in the world. Let me have the right of liberty. That is the only condition of growth."

Vivekananda's belief in freedom led him to advocate the rights of the individual. According to Vivekananda, the rights of the individual are natural and inalienable as freedom is. Vivekananda's recognition of the natural rights of an individual puts an end to all kinds of privileges in society and establishes the right to individual equality. According to S L. Mukherjee.
Privilege-breaking and elimination of all propitiations constitute the mission of his (Vivekananda's) Vedantic freedom in its social Character.

Despite his unbudging regard for individual freedom, Vivekananda did not place individual interests above society. He maintained an organic view of life. According to him,

"The individual's life is in the life of the whole, the individual's happiness is in the happiness of the whole."

Social Freedom

Vivekananda opposed social restriction that hinders individual initiative and social growth and wanted to weed them out. According to him individual freedom is closely related to social freedom.

"None deserves liberty who is not ready to give liberty."

He regarded liberty and equality as complementary to one another. Social liberty encourages and ought to encourage social equality and unity.

"Being of one mind is the secret of society."

Vivekananda was not satisfied with mere denunciation of the authoritarian outlook of the society. Positively he encouraged the society to cultivate a liberal and assimilative outlook and learn things from others. He believed that social synthesis would ensure the proper growth of society. The process of social synthesis is the offshoot of struggle between the forces of internal reaction and external pressure of progressive forces. It may be
said in Hegelian terminology that social reaction is the thesis, social liberty antithesis and social assimilation and exchange of knowledge the synthesis. Societies that even thrive on social liberty may suffer from a complacency, megalomania and hinder their growth. This lacuna is to be remedied by maintaining constant and profuse exchange of ideas and contacts with other communities of the world.

**Economic Freedom**

Vivekananda rightly realized that economic poverty has been a hindrance to the individual freedom. By economic freedom Vivekananda meant freedom from want. He noticed that the material freedom and individual happiness are interrelated. According to him:

"All the members of a society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education or knowledge."68

Material possessions imply the right to property and Vivekananda recognized it as natural right of the individual. But his concept of economic freedom is not based on exploitative and acquisitive instinct of the individual. It is altruistic and ethical. According to S.N. Malhotra:

"The Śāṅkhaṇḍins are not economic individualists, though they admire many other principles of liberalism. Their ethical universalism cannot be reconciled to the egoistic individualism of the economic theory of the liberalism of the early nineteenth century."69

Vivekananda’s economic freedom, which stands for equal economic opportunities, reduces economic disparities. As Vivekananda’s
individual is ethical, he is not exploitative and acquisitive. The individual
uplifts himself by sacrificing his thirst for the pleasures of life, accumulation of wealth and serves society.

As the quest of the individual is for higher spiritual freedom, the individual would not utilize his economic advantage to exploit the other individuals. Instead, he would restrain his economic wants to hasten his quest for spiritual freedom. It should be noted that Vivekananda did not advise the individual to give up his material wants. He wanted the individual to enjoy wealth in the name of the Lord.

"Have all that you want, and more only know the truth and realize it, wealth does not belong to anybody. Have no idea of proprietorship, possessorship. You are nobody, nor am I, nor anyone else, all belongs to the Lord."79

This means that the individual can enjoy his wealth but at the same time he must use it for social welfare with the spirit of religious service. Thus for Vivekananda,

"Wealth is for distribution"71

Wealth is, therefore, not only personal but also social in purpose. The Bhagavad Gita too enjoins the same view.

"The virtuous, who partake of what is left after sacrifice, are absolved of all sins. Those sinful ones, who cook food for the sake of nourishing their body alone, eat only sin."72
To Vivēkānanda, performance of selfless activity, either social or economic, is also a path to Mūrya. In other words, selfless activity is consistent with spiritual pursuit of life.

While expounding Karma Yōga, Vivēkānanda, lauded the life of an ideal house-holder. According to Vivēkānanda the householder is the prop, the basic of the whole society. He pointed out that

"It is a very difficult task to be a house-holder and perform all his social, economic and spiritual obligations properly."

The maintenance of family, social and spiritual life depends on his material pursuits. According to him.

"A house-holder who does not struggle to get wealth is immoral. If he is lazy and content to lead an idle life, he is immoral, because upon him depend hundreds. If he gets riches, hundreds of others will be thereby supported."

Thus the pursuit of material life by the individual is not a deviation from his spiritual path. It brings him nearer to the spiritual freedom. The Vēdantic outlook of Vivēkānanda makes it clear that he does not prescribe poverty for one and all and does not defy poverty. He recommended the pursuit of material life in the interests of common man and consolidation of socio-economic organization of society.

Vivēkānanda considered matter and spirit to be one and the same reality. Pursuit of material life fulfills spiritual freedom. In case of conflict
between the material and spiritual life, he preferred the former. He pointed out:

"I do not believe in a God, Who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven."

His master Sri Rāmakrishṇa Paramahamsa taught him that religion was not for empty bellies. Vivekananda echoed his master when he said that

"It is an insult to a starving people to offer them religion; it is an insult to a starving man to teach him metaphysics."

To the worldly man, matter is real and to deny material life to him is to condemn him to death. According to Vivekānanda:

"There runs an economic struggle through every religious struggle. The animal called man has some religious influence, but he is guided by economy. Individuals are guided by something else, but the mass of mankind never made a move unless economy was involved."

Thus Vivekānanda wanted to base the organization of society on a synthesis of material and spiritual life. This synthesis has been called 'dignified materialism.' It can also be described as 'sublimated spiritualism.'

Thus Vivekānanda's concept of freedom is all inclusive. It stands for a synthesis of the individual and social freedom, material and spiritual freedom.
Philosophy of equality

His concept of equality is an offshoot of his concept of freedom. According to Vivēkānaṇḍa the struggle for freedom is also a struggle for equality. ‘Equality is the sign of free individual’

In the words of Vivēkānanda

“No man and no nation can attempt to gain physical freedom without physical equality, nor mental freedom without mental equality.”

Vivēkānanda’s concept of equality is based on unity of individuals. Freedom expands into equality, and equality merges in freedom. Freedom and equality are interchangeable and interdependent. Explaining Vivekananda’s concept of equality, S.L. Mukherjee Writes;

“...liberty is equality”

Equality is only the beginning of individual life and the end is the realization of universal oneness. The concept of universal brotherhood must merge in universal oneness. According to Vivekananda.

“Vēdaṇṭa formulates, not universal brotherhood but universal oneness”

By equality Vivēkānanda did not mean any particular formal aspect like the social, or the economic or the political. He was concerned only with the process and not the form of equality. He made it clear.
"We preach neither social equality nor inequality, but that every being has the same rights, and insist on freedom of thought and action in every way."

He stood for equal rights and opportunities. He further says:

"If there is inequality in nature, still there must be equal chance for all-or if greater for some and for some less-the weaker should be given more chance than the strong."

He denounced privileges and discrimination in any form, either in individual thinking or social existence. His concept of equality bears the impress of his spiritual thinking, which lays emphasis on gradual growth of the individual. The assumption of gradual growth of individual implies the existence of human inequalities or differences. He was of the view that the demand for absolute equality of individuals in society is an impossibility and is also fanatical in demand.

"True equality has never been and can never be on earth. How can we all be equal here? This impossible kind of equality implies total death."

He perceived that inequality is natural, beneficial and creative. But he also affirmed that inequality is not eternal and absolute. He Justified the individual aspiration for equality and also the necessity of struggle to limit inequality. According to him.

"Inequality is the very basis of creation. At the same time the forces struggling to obtain equality are as much a necessity of creation as those which destroy it."
His belief in human inequality is based on *Sāṅkhya, pathāñjali*’s “in-filling of nature” and the doctrine of *Karma* while his belief in *Vedānta* led him to proclaim equality of human beings.

*Sāṅkhya* points out the struggle between homogeneity and differentiation and believes in the disturbance of equilibrium. Belief in the disturbance of equilibrium convinced Vivekananda not to affirm either absolute human equality or inequality. He believed in the rationality and inevitability of both inequality and equality. The *Sāṅkhya* psychological analysis of human nature also points out human inequalities. Differences exist among individuals because they are differentiated by *Guṇas* or qualities, *Satva, Rajas* and *Tamas*.

Vivēkānanda also believed in the *Patāñjali*’s “in-filling of nature” which meant.

“that the amoeba goes higher and higher until it becomes a Buda.”

*Patāñjali*’s spiritual evolution points out one species being changed into another by the in-filling of nature. Accepting *Patāñjali*’s views vivekananda maintained that difference between man and man is due to the manifestation of spiritual growth. The impact of *Patāñjali*’s “in-filling of nature” made Vivēkānanda’s concept of equality creative and positive. He advocated for a levelling up of individuals without destroying their individuality.
"The solution is not by bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher."88

The process of levelling up of individuals is possible only in an atmosphere of social freedom and not coercion.

Vēdānta stands for spiritual equality of man. According to Vivēkānānda, equality is a spiritual necessity of life to realize universal oneness. He perceived that inequality.

"is the source of all bondage, physical mental and spiritual."88

As a Vēdāntin he firmly believed that all life is one. The life and existence of an individual is not separate, distinct and independent from that of others. As all individuals are sparks of the same divine force or Entity, all are free and equal and one. Explaining the position of Vivēkānanda, B.N. Dutta Writes.

"He (Vivēkānānda) showed that no man is inferior to the other, no class has got special qualification than the other."90

The Vēdāntic spirit of oneness makes the individual identify himself with the community and serves it with a service motive without any personal gain.

"The individual's life is in the life of the whole, the individual's happiness is in the happiness of the whole, the individual's existence is inconceivable-this is an eternal truth and is the bed-rock on which the Universe is built."91
Thus Vivekananda’s concept of equality fosters fellowship and unity among individuals and nations. It may be said that Vivekananda laid emphasis on social unity for socio economic upliftment of the people. He was of the view that mere unity in society is fictitious unless it is accompanied by the desire to uplift the down-trodden. The desire to uplift others becomes well established only when the lower self of individual is erased and community consciousness promoted. The individual must think that the collective self is inclusive of the individual self. In the words of Vivekananda:

“The eternal law is self-sacrifice, not self-assertion. What self to assert when all is one? There are no ‘rights’, all is love.”

Vivekananda held that social unity was to be maintained by identity and love. Social unity becomes real only when privileges are rooted out and equality and freedom promoted. Thus, Vivekananda visualized socialism for the establishment of a just society.

Socialism

Vivekananda’s socialism is spiritualistic. He wanted to materialize the Advaitic concept of unity in the social and political life. He was of the view that socialism could establish a just society by eliminating inequalities through the spirit of love and social oneness. His socialism visualizes a just economy based on individual self-restraint which leads to equitable distribution of wealth. According to Vivekananda,
"The doctrine which demands the sacrifice of individual freedom to social supremacy is called socialism."

Vivekānanda found in socialism the key to social unity and economic justice. It is only the principle of justice—social, economic and political—that inspired him to proclaim himself a socialist.

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

He made the prophetic remark that

"Everything goes to show that socialism or some form of rule by the people, call it what you will, is coming on the boards."

The Vedic concept of unity, which postulates freedom and equality, encouraged Vivekānanda to espouse socialism. He thought that Vedānta is conducive to the efflorescence of socialism.

"Vivekānanda affirms that the Vedānta can furnish all the modern communistic or equalizing theories with a spiritual basis."

Both socialism and Vedānta aim at human equality, freedom and unity and both advocate the uplift and liberation of the masses from social, political and economic bondage and exploitation.

Vivekānanda's versatile and volatile Neo-Vedānta negated neither freedom nor equality nor accepted any one of them to the exclusion of the other.

"Vedānta made Vivekānanda a liberal in heart and a socialist in content. He reconciled the liberal idea of freedom with the socialist
fascination for equality by means of the spirit of oneness and love of Vedānta.  

Liberalism which stands for individual freedom and dignity provides the thought and socialism the means of a just society. Socialism is rootless without individual freedom and liberalism is growthless without accepting socialist concept of economic equality. Although he was a liberal, he visualized the eclipse of capitalism, and though he greeted the advent of socialism, it was only a half hearted measure to him.

"The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this (socialism) one be tried-if for nothing else, for the novelty of thing.

As a liberal, he realized the existence of human inequalities and classes and as a socialist he advocated class unity.

Social Unity

Vivekananda, on the basis of Sankhya analysis of human nature, believed in the class differences and also advocated class unity on the grounds of the Vedānta. His concept of society is based on unity in variety. Vivekananda visualized only the existence of class differences, but not contradictions. His concept of society is based on unity and not on contradictions from within. He pointed out that progress comes through struggle.

"This complex struggle between something inside and the eternal world is what we call life. So it is clear that when this struggle ceases, there will be an end of life."
The universe is a creation of struggle between Prāyu and Ṭvaṣṭra. As the world is based on unity, contradictions exist neither in the internal nor in the external world but only between the internal and the external world. He believed in the unity of cause and effect, ends and means, and emphasized that ends and means are interchangeable and inseparable and the ends never justifies the means. He did not believe in the biological theory of evolution of competition and struggle.

"These competitions and struggles and evils that we see are not the effect of the involution or the cause, but they are in the way."

According to Vivēkānanda, unity in society is not a social or political device to keep class differences under control but a spontaneous social and spiritual necessity. He visualized social unity on the basis of Vedānta which teaches the oneness of life and oneness of everything.

"We shall see how it (Vedānta) demonstrates that all our misery comes through ignorance, and this ignorance is the idea of manyfoldness, this separation between man and man, between nation and nation----- But the Vedānta says this separation does not exist, it is not real. It is merely apparent on the surface. In the heart of things there is unity still. If you go below the surface, you find that unity between man and man, between races and races, high and low, rich and poor, gods and men and men and animals."

The difference between Indian thinking and western materialism becomes very sharp here. Marxism, for instances maintains differences as real differences and create a dialectical philosophy on the basis of the
principle of contradiction. For them differences are real, and contradictions are also real. They do not go beyond the surface level differences. Finally they all end up creating philosophies of differences.

On the other hand, Indian thinking had kept unity as the ultimate principle upon which everything is based. What the West counted as differences are seen as varieties only, or mere multiplicities that strongly carry a principle of unity beyond the surface level. This inability of perceiving the unity is called as ‘Avidya’ or ‘Ignorance’: ignorance that of the reality. The Upanishads themselves vouchsafes for the principle of unity.

**Mass Education**

Vivekanānda pinned his faith in the mass education, sacred and secular, and pleaded for the restoration of their lost identity. He pointed out that when masses were educated by the middle class, they would remain grateful to them.

"Therefore I say, try to rouse the lower classes from slumber by imparting learning and culture to them. When they will awaken-and awaken one day they must-they also will not forget your good services to them and will remain grateful to you."^{102}

Vivekananda’s approach to the masses was creative and democratic. As mass awakening was to be gradual and peaceful, the ushering of a socialist society was to be achieved by peaceful means. His socialism thus stands for self-reliance and self-rule of the masses.
Equitable Economy

Vivēkānānda's concern for the poor made him assert the importance of materialism

"Material civilization, nay, even luxury, is necessary to create work for the poor. Bread! Bread! I do not believe in a God, who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven."

He supported the enjoyment of material life because he hated poverty and also placed spiritualism above materialism as he knew the limitations of a material society.

According to Sister Nivedita, Vivēkānānda witnessed the selfishness of capital and the struggle for privilege and confined to someone that western life now looked to him 'like hell'. He was aware that

"The West is groaning under the tyranny of Shylocks."

He used the Marxian language that

"Gold standard has been making the poor poorer and rich richer."

Vivēkānānda wanted to shape economic life on spiritual basis. He warned that

"Without the knowledge of the spirit, all material knowledge is adding only fuel to fire, only giving into the hands of selfish man one more instrument to take what belongs to others, to live upon the life of others, instead of giving up his life for them."
According to him, the success of just economy depends on individual contentment which results from restraint from within. Individual self-restraint leads to equitable distribution of wealth in society. Vivēkānanda's emphasis on renunciation and service 'may be equated with mutual social aid'.

**Limitation of Wants**

Socialists believe that the individual happiness depends on multiplication of wants. But Vivēkānanda believed that individual freedom and happiness depends not on multiplication but on reduction of wants.

"If the power to satisfy our desires is increased on arithmetical progression, the power of desire is increased in geometrical progression." 109

The problem of poverty remains as long as man thinks in terms of multiplication of wants. Therefore remedy lies in limitation of wants by the individual. He observed

"... while the Western man tries to measure how much it is possible for him to possess and enjoy, the Eastern seems to take the opposite course, and to measure how little of material possessions he can do with." 110

**Humanistic Approach**

Vivēkānanda, as a humanist, regarded man not only as an end in itself but also held that man is divine by nature. He made it clear.

"That each man should be treated not as what he manifests, but as what he stands for." 111
In the words of A.V. Ratna Reddy.

"Vivekānanda's humanism may be called spiritualistic humanism or Humanistic Advaita."

The humanistic Advaita of Vivekānanda advocates identity of humanity with divinity. His humanism defends the purity of human nature, regards man as God, attacks social, economic and religious evils of society and inculcates faith and strength in the individual. His spiritualistic assumption of human nature forms the basis of humanistic Advaita.

**Purity of Human Nature**

Vivekānanda, who was inspired and illumined by the *Upanishads*, held that human nature is pure, free and divine. He believed that everything that is strong, good and powerful in human nature is the outcome of that divinity.

"So potentially, each one of us has that infinite ocean of Existence, knowledge and Bliss as our birthright, our real nature; and the difference between us is caused by the greater or lesser power to manifest that divine.""11

As human nature is pure, man is ethical social and altruistic. All are free and equal in a humanistic society. A free and equal society stands for rationalism. Rationalism constrains the individual to identify himself with the community. Thus Vivekānanda’s concept of purity of human nature stands for purity of reason also. When rationalism is not properly developed in the individual, equality and freedom become meaningless.
Thus Vivēkānāṇḍa's concept of purity of human nature stands for a free, equal and rational society.

**Humanistic Advaita**

According to Vivēkānāṇḍa there was nothing above and beyond man. Man and God were one to him. There was no difference between his ideal of humanity and divinity.

"Man is the highest being that exists and this is the greatest world. We cannot have any conception of God higher than man, so our God is man and man is God" 1

According to Vivēkānāṇḍa, man is not only to be loved and served but also to be worshipped. He believed that individual salvation is incomplete without the total salvation of mankind. He declared.

"I believe in God, and I believe in man, I believe in helping the miserable, I believe in going even to hell to save others" 1

Romain Rolland summed up Vivēkānāṇḍa's humanism thus:

"It was wonderful that he (Vivēkānanda) kept in his feverish hands to the end the equal balance between the two poles: a burning love for the absolute (The Advaita) and the irresistible appeal of suffering Humanity. And what makes him so appealing to us is that at those times when equilibrium was no longer possible and he had to make a choice, it was the latter that won the day" 1

Vivēkānāṇḍa's humanism advocates that man who is an end in himself must also become a means to serve humanity.
"The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. Of course all animals are temples too, but man is the highest, the Taj Mahal of temples."

The man himself is the subject and object, the end and means.

"It is for this reason that some critics called Neo-Vedanta also as Humanistic Advaitism (manavādwaita)."

As an end man shines in his own divine light and as a means he serves others to find divinity in them and also to make conscious of their divinity.

"First, let us be Gods, and then help others to be Gods. 'Be and Make'. Let this be our motto."

As a finite being, man serves society and as an infinite being seeks to embrace humanity. Thus humanity is Vivēkānanda's God and social service his religion. In the words of Chelsev,

"Though we do not agree with the idealistic basis of Vivēkānanda's humanism, we recognize that it possesses many features of active humanism manifested above all in a fervent desire to elevate man, it instill in him a sense of his own dignity, sense of responsibility for his own destiny and the destiny of all people to make him strive for the ideals of good, truth, justice, to foster in man an abhorrence for any suffering. The humanistic ideal of Vivēkānanda is to a certain degree identical with Gorkhy's man with a capital letter."
Vivekananda was not content with the mere defense of divinity of human beings. He was also earthly and wanted to remove the weakness of society which impede the growth of man into humanism.

Attack on Environmental Weakness

Vivekananda revolted against the social, economic and religious evils which hindered individual growth and social perfection.

As a humanist he declared war on poverty.

"I do not believe in a God or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth."¹¹¹

Vivekananda believed in reason. He subjected even the Vedas to individual reason and judgement. He pointed out that religious orthodoxy 'stunts the growth of humanity'.¹²²

According to Narvane,

"In a theistic religion man is often portrayed as a miserable sinner or weak or helpless being completely at the mercy of God and Nature. This trend has developed side by side with the humanistic trend which exalts man as the true abode of divinity. Vivekananda's aim was to strengthen the latter element in religion."¹¹¹

Technique of Activity

Vivekananda envisaged the technique of activity to hasten individual and social growth. His technique of activity postulates: (a) the unity of ends and means (b) the imperative of individual initiative in social
reform (c) the necessity of mass-awakening and (d) the right to resistance as moral and spiritual necessity.\textsuperscript{124}

Vivekānanda's technique of activity depended on his philosophy of life. His view of life was neither pessimistic nor optimistic. He knew the limitations of pessimism and optimism and regarded them as transitory. As a Vedāntin, no activity is either wholly good or bad. However between good and bad actions, he was for good actions.

"The result of every work is mixed with good and evil. There is no good that has not a touch of evil in it. Like smoke around the fire, some evil always clings to work. We should engage in such works as bring the largest amount of good and smallest measure of evil."\textsuperscript{125}H

His affirmation of the positive aspect of life thus stands for positive activity which expands the individual growth and freedom. He regarded activity as indispensable to the social growth and spiritual freedom of the individual to offer resistance and compromises with circumstances. Individual freedom is illusory when it is based on selfish activity. The activity which promotes individual freedom is moral and selfless.

Individual inactivity should not be interpreted as non-resistance. By practicing non-resistance, he condemns, his growth and freedom. Vivekānanda did not prescribe non-resistance. He pointed out that society as a whole cannot practice non-resistance. His outlook was not utopian but thoroughly realistic.
"I do not know if I have seen twenty persons in my life who are really calm
and non-resisting, and I have travelled over half the world."

The non-resistant individual takes no interest in matters of society
and will not be critical of it.

"For him (Vivekananda) the difference between the ideal and real has
vanished and individual and communal differences are obliterated. He
visualizes the Universal outlook of oneness and regards the universe as a
play of unity in variety."

He is an embodiment of the ideal of freedom and strength which is
to be followed by community for perfection. His technique of social and
political activity maintains that selfless activity is social and spiritual. It is
indispensable to the growth of the individual and society. He considered
activity as an end and also a means in the individual and social life. His
right perspective of the unity of ends and means made it for him to correct
the social evils in a constructive way. As a prophet of the masses, he
asserted that their liberation is based on education. He also eulogized to
make the individual moral and spiritual.

In other words, his faith in the individual as an end and advocacy of
mass liberation made him become an avow democrat. His technique of
social and political activity is intended to make the masses self-reliant.

**Spiritual Nationalism**

Vivekananda rightly observed that each nation has a mission and a
message of her own.
“Just as there is an individuality in every man, so there is a national individuality-each nation has a destiny to fulfill, each nation has a message to deliver, each nation has a mission to accomplish.”

Pursuit of spiritualism constituted India’s way of life. According to Vivekananda,

“....here in this blessed land, the foundation, the backbone, the life centre is religion and religion alone”

He held that the transcendental or impersonal constituted India’s individuality.

According to Dr. Narvane,

“Towards the end of nineteenth century many enlightened and patriotic people had come to believe that religion had outlived its utility as a lever of social progress and that Indian culture needed to be given a new direction. Vivekananda, like Gandhi, disagreed with this view. He thought religion was bound up with India’s destiny.”

Therefore, it was his mission to reverse the eternal teachings of the Vedaś and the Upaniṣad to strengthen the nation’s growth and faith in its individuality.

According to Swāmiji, spirituality constituted India’s individuality. He was for the retention and expansion of its individuality and not for its replacement.

“As India was spiritual, he felt that its social and political institutions must be national and spiritual. It was for that he advocated India’s spiritual nationalism.”
He believed that India would become dynamic only by expanding her spiritual knowledge at home and abroad. He was also of the view that pursuit of spiritualism was not only in the interest of India but also in the larger interest of humanity. Thus he wanted to unite mankind on the basis of spirituality.

Of all the mentors of the Indian Renaissance, Vivekananda propagated with untiring energy and enthusiasm the incandescent spirituality of India which constituted her national growth and vitality. Vivekananda pointed out that there can be no regeneration for India unless it regained its spirituality. When her spirituality was lost in oblivion and subjected to derision, it was mulish to think of her independence. He was of the view that India re relegated her religion and lost her freedom. He felt that India by neglecting her faith weakened itself and was enmeshed in social, political and spiritual servitude. He traced the political success of Britain to her faith in herself and India's weakness to the neglect of the Upanishads. He admonished.

"Go back to your Upanishads, the shining and the strengthening, the bright philosophy. Take up this philosophy. The greatest truths are the simplest things in the world, simple as your existence: The truths of the Upanishads are before you. Take them, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand."
He pointed out that the *Upanishad* blazoned out freedom and fearlessness. Thus Vivekānanda held that India would become dynamic and strong by cultivating faith in her *Vedanta*, the impersonal religion.

**Religion and National Unity**

Vivekānanda's intense nationalism was the product of his innate religion. He held that *Vedanta* was a Universal religion. He pointed out that India’s religious disunity rather than diversity constituted a grave menace to the national unity. He was of the view that the reforming religious sects in India suffered from schismatic outlook and prevented the growth of national unity. Therefore, the Swāmiji felt that religious conflicts must give place for concurrence, diversity for unity.

“The one common ground that we have is our sacred tradition, our religion. This is the only common ground, and upon that we shall have to build. In Europe, political ideas form the national unity. In Asia, religious ideals form the national unity. The unity in religion, therefore, is absolutely necessary as the first condition of the future of India.”

To achieve national unity, he devised the concept of common religion. According to Vivekānanda, recognition of common religion was absolutely essential for India’s unity. He visualized a common religion which incorporates the common principles of diverse religious sects. Religious unity could be achieved by accepting truth from all sects. He explained his concept of common religion as follows.

“There must be the recognition of one religion through the length and breadth of this land. What do I mean by one religion? Not in the sense of
one religion as held among the Christians, or the Mohammadans, or the
Buddhists. We know that our religion has certain common grounds,
common to all our sects, however varying their conclusions may be,
however different their claims may be. So there are certain common
grounds; and within their limitations this religion of ours admits of a
marvellous variation, an infinite amount of liberty to think and live our own
lives.\textsuperscript{14}\textsuperscript{14}

He conceded that the religious sects may retain their identity but
they should not threaten national unity. He denounced sectarianism not
sects. His concept of common religion is based on equality of sects and
co-ordination of faiths.

The impersonal religion of Vivēkānanda was identical with strength
and selfless activity. He pointed out that selfless activity and spread of
spirituality among the masses would awaken them and enable them to
regain their lost individuality, namely inherent spirituality. He wanted to mould
India as the field of eternal spiritual activity. He told his disciple that.

"The sight of the Country's misery and the thought of its future do not let
me remain quiet any more! Even the Samadhi and all that appears as futile-
even the sphere of Brahma with its enjoyments becomes insipid. My vow
of life is to think of your welfare."\textsuperscript{125}\textsuperscript{125}

In the words of Ratna Reddy

"The panoramic carousel of mass poverty and ignorance seaved his heart
and instigated him to make Vēdānta practical."\textsuperscript{136}\textsuperscript{136}
To alleviate the miseries of the poor, Vivekānanda subordinated the bliss of the absolute to the liberation of the Indian masses

"Patriotism means love of the country; and the country means its masses. Only Vivekānanda arrived at this road through religion."

Like his master, he said that it was an insult to offer religion to starved and afflicted people. He held the conviction that materialism fulfills spiritualism. His identity with the poor and downtrodden reached its zenith at Kanyakumari in 1892. Here he felt so deeply and strikingly the despicable plight of India and determined to dedicate his life to serve his countrymen.

"To him (Vivekānanda) religion was no longer an isolated province of human endeavor; it embraced the whole scheme of things, not only the Dharma, the Veda, the Upanishads, the meditation of sages, the asceticism of great monks, the vision of the most High, but the heart of the people, their lives, their hopes, their misery, their poverty, their degradation, their sorrows, their woes, and he saw that the Dharma and even the Veda, without the people, were as so much straws in the eyes of the Most High. Verily at Kanyakumari the Swami was the Patriot and Prophet in one."\(^{138}\)

Kanyakumari represents what Vivekānanda calls practical Veda.\(^{139}\) At Kanyakumari he formulated his plan to go abroad for serving India.

"Taking stock of the world situation at the end of the nineteenth century, Swamiji could not have selected a more suitable country than America for gaining some help for the poor of India."\(^{142}\)
He pointed out that the west was tired of Bhūga and was fit for Yōga while India which was enmeshed in poverty cannot contemplate on Yōga. He told the Americans what India needed was not proselytizing missions but bred and scientific knowledge. He pointed out that an exchange of spiritual and scientific knowledge between the East and the West would provide a better and stable world.

Thus, Vivēkānanda, though not a born patriot, was patriotism of the patriot. The more he knew India, the more he loved India.

"Patriotism was not a vision or faith to him, but a fervid feeling of identity with India’s oneness and its masses. It was the fruit of an inward feeling, urge and growth. He heard the voice of India, discussed it, meditated on it and knelt before it with rapture and became one with it. Again it was his innate love for India that restrained him from condemning its age-old institutions, for they served India well and their utility should not be judged from the present standards."

Vivēkānanda wanted a receptive and retentive India.

"The traditional past of India illuminated him, the present reflected her degradation and beckoned him to remold the future of India and even the world, which was afflicted with materialism, on a firm basis of spiritual unity of mankind."

Vivēkānanda held the view that pursuit of spirituality was not only in India’s interest but it was also the impending necessity of the western world. As such he wanted India to deluge the world with the message of her spirituality.
Internationalism

Thus, Vivēkānanda’s nationalism is not narrow or exclusive.

“Intense was his love for his country, his love was not confined to his country alone. There was nothing chauvinistic about his patriotism. His heart was large enough to take within its embrace the whole of humanity. His ultimate aim was internationalism and brotherhood of man”.

Thus, his nationalism paved the way for his international outlook. He considered nationalism and internationalism as interdependent. According to Vivēkānanda, national growth and expansion depends on cultivating international outlook. He expressed the view that nations became dynamic and harmonious by assimilating knowledge, scientific and spiritual. Therefore, he postulated his internationalism on mutual exchange of knowledge among nations and advocated union of nations on a spiritual basis. He was indeed expanding the idea, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. In the words of Isherwood, Vivēkānanda’s nationalism

“Was not nationalism in the smaller sense, it was a kind of supernationalism, a kind of internationalism sublimated.”

Vivēkānanda’s international outlook was moulded partly by his reaction against India’s degradation. Partly by his experience of life in the West but mainly by *Vedānta*. He traced India’s backwardness, degradation and slavery to the narrow and exclusive outlook of Indians. The Indians, falsely believed in the superiority of their culture and civilization and refused to come into contact with other countries on an equal basis. They held others as unequal and branded them as *Mlecchas*, untouchables.
They refused to share knowledge with other peoples. In the words of Vivêkânaṇḍa:

"India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word Mlechcha and stopped from communication with others."

Vivêkânaṇḍa thanked Britain for expelling India's inactivity and Narrow-mindedness:

"Since the English came, they have been forcing you back into communion with other nations, and you are visibly rising again. Every one that comes out of the country confers the benefit on the whole nation; for it is by doing that alone that your horizon will expand."

He also commended Raja Ram Mohan Roy for breaking India's exclusiveness:

"----- every one of you knows that little stir, the little life that you see in India, begins from the day when Raja Ram Mohan Roy broke through the walls of that exclusiveness. Since that day, history in India has taken another turn and now it is growing with accelerated motion."

According to him many Indians must go abroad to widen their mental horizons.

His own experience of life in the East and the West showed him the importance of internationalism. He wanted to bring the East and the West together by exchange of scientific and spiritual knowledge. He pointed out that the West which had developed conquest of external nature was in need of spirituality and the East which adhered to spirituality
must learn scientific knowledge from the West. In the words of Romain Rolland, Vivekānanda:

"Prolonged contact with the West made him feel more deeply the personality of India. And in contrast this made him value the strong and multiple personality of the West. Both seemed to him equally necessary, for they were complementary, awaiting the world to unite them, the common Gospel, and it was he who was to open the path to union."

The concept of unity of the world even on material and spiritual grounds was a reality to Vivekānanda.

"To my mind, if modern science is proving anything again and again, it is this, that we are one mentally, spiritually and physically.

His faith in internationalism was also strengthened by Vēdānta. The Vēdāntic concept of love and Universal oneness captivated his heart. On the basis of Vēdānta, he regard all nations as equal and condemned all kinds of privileges. He pointed out that.

"... that between nations one is superior and the other inferior has no meaning whatsoever."

He was of the view that individuals and nations were parts of the Universal Existence, Brahmay.

"Each individual is like a bubble, and nations resemble many bubbles. Gradually these nations are joining, and I am sure the day will come when separation will vanish and that oneness to which we are all going will become manifest."
He hoped that nations by realizing their individual nature would also realize the nature of universal unity.

**Spiritual Leadership of India**

Vivekānanda believed that it was the historic mission of India to lead the countries of the world to spiritual unity. He proclaimed that the Indians were

"Fated by Divine providence to play the spiritual note in this harmony of nations."

He was emphatic that in the realm of spiritual knowledge India was superior to the west. Therefore he proclaimed

"Once more the world must be conquered by India. This is the dream of my life..."

He warned that failure of India's mission spelt death to humanity and to herself.

"Shall India die?. Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct, all moral perfection will be extinct, all sweet-souled sympathy for religions will be extinct; and in its place will reign the duality of lust and luxury as the male and female deities, with money as its priest, fraud, force and competition its ceremonies and human soul its sacrifice. Such a thing can never be."

Vivekānanda's advocacy of harmony and spiritual unity of nations was based on his conviction in *Vedānta*. He considered it as a Universal
religion. He was of the view that on the basis of Viśiṣṭa all national and international problems could be solved

"My message in life is to ask the East and the West not to quarrel over different ideals, but to show them that the goal is same in both cases, however opposite it may appear."\(^{155}\)

He was for all round progress and perfection of the human race. Following the thought of Vivekananda, Romain Rolland advised Europe to meet Asia.

"She is working for Us. We are working for her. Europe and Asia are two halves of the sole."\(^{156}\)

**Views of Caste and Social Evolution in India**

Vivekananda's concept of social evolution postulates the cyclical rule of the four castes, namely, the Brāhmin, the Kṣatriya, the Vaiśya and the Śūdra. The social evolution is through succession and replacement of the degenerated caste rule. The Social evolution will be completed and perfected by successive caste rule. In other words, caste system is the root and social evolution the fruit of history. Vivekananda read social evolution in terms of caste rule. Therefore, he viewed that social evolution based on the caste system is natural and social, progressive and orderly. According to Vivekananda *'Caste is a natural order*"\(^{157}\)

He pointed out that society is a combination of the four groups or castes viz. Brāhmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras. According to him these four castes are everywhere present at all times, *'in all civilized societies."*\(^{158}\)
He was of the view that nature classifies human being into groups or castes on the basis of predominance of Guṇas—Satva, Rajas and Tamas. His concept of caste is in accordance with Bhagavad Gītā.

"The four orders of society (the Brāhmin, the Kṣatriya, the Vaiśya and the Śudra) were created by me classifying them according to their parental qualities and apportioning corresponding duties to them."

Vivekānanda was of the view that caste system stands for mutual growth and promotes harmonious relations among the other castes. He did not visualize caste rivalry but only cooperation of castes in promoting progress and unity. It should be noted that for Vivekānanda, it is caste that is natural and eternal and not society. According to him,

"Society did not exist ages ago, possibly will not exist ages hence. Most probably it is one of passing stage through which we are going towards a higher evolution."

When society is not natural and eternal, its authority cannot be absolute over individuals or groups. As long as the ruling class is conscious of community interests, it is allowed to rule but when it becomes degenerated, it will be overthrown by the other castes.

**Cyclical Caste Rule**

The cyclical caste rule provides the form of Government. According to Vivekananda,

"... from a careful study of the history of the world, it appears that, in conformity to the law of nature, the four
castes, the Brāhmin, the Kśatriya, the Vaisya, and Śūdra do, in every society, one after another in succession, govern the world.¹⁶¹

The Brāhmin caste represented aristocracy, the Kśatriya monarchy, the Vīśva plutocracy and the Śūdra democracy. As the cyclical caste rule is evolutionary, forms of government are evolutionary and social in content. The priestly order was replaced by Kśatriya, the Kśatriyas was succeeded by Vaisya, and the Vaisya will be succeeded by Śūdra. According to Dr. V.P. Varma, Vivēkānanda felt,

"That the history of the world was a manifestation of the four principles which find their concrete realisation in the four-fold social varnas ---- The spiritual principle, he felt, was embodied in Indian history of Roman expansion and imperialism represented Kṣetra or military factor in action, the epoch of British mercantile aristocracy was the concrete demonstration of the Vaisya principle, while the sudocracy of the future will be represented by American democracy."¹⁶²

Thus, according to Vivēkānanda, the British rule will be replaced by the Śūdra rule in India. According to him, the first three castes have had their day. Now is the time for the rise of the Śūdras and 'None can resist it.'¹⁶³

He identified democracy with the rise of the Śūdras. He called this age as the age of the Śūdras and welcomed it for it brings out mass-awakening and progress. He wanted to awaken them to shoulder their responsibility of self-government. He was of the view that inspite of the numerical majority of the Sudras they always remained as subjects because of their 'mutual hatred.'¹⁶⁴ But he was not dismayed. He hoped.
"A time will come when there will be the rising of the Sudra class, with their Sudra-hood... will gain absolute supremacy in every society."

Vivekananda pointed out that Sudra rule is also not eternal. Due to debasement of cultural values, the Sudra rule too will degenerate. The end of Sudra rule will usher in again a new cycle of the caste rule.

"As the cycle is in the natural order of things, he (Vivekananda) admits that the Sudra's rule will be replaced by the Brahmans at the completion of the cycle; but he clearly points out that this time the Brahmans will be new Brahmans."

Thus Vivekananda did not visualize any contradiction at any phase of social evolution. According to his philosophy the downtrodden people of India will definitely overthrow the British rule and for this purpose he instilled self-confidence and patriotism in the minds of Indian youth. At the same time he asserted that the entire process will be natural and evolutionary.
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