

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, HIS RECONSTRUCTION
OF
HINDUISM AS A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

By
PILLACHIRA MATHEW THOMAS, B.A., B.D.

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University

October 1969

MASTER OF ARTS (1969)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario.

TITLE: Swami Vivekananda, His Reconstruction
of Hinduism as a Universal Religion

AUTHOR: Pillachira Mathew Thomas, B.A. (University of Madras)
B.D. (Serampore College)

SUPERVISOR: Professor J. G. Arapura

NUMBER OF PAGES: iv, 95

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was done under the guidance of Professor J. G. Arapura, without whose generous help the following pages would have shown far more errors and deficiencies than they have now. The author wishes to express his deep gratitude to him.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I VIVEKANANDA AND HIS TIMES	1
Growth of Nationalism	2
Hindu Reform Movements	4
Vivekananda's Tutelage under Ramakrishna	9
Vivekananda, the Patriot	11
Spiritualization of Indian Nationalism	14
II NEO-VEDANTISM OF RAMAKRISHNA AND VIVEKANANDA	18
Practical Vedanta of Ramakrishna	19
Vivekananda's New Approach	24
Advaita, the Only Rational Religion	27
III THE IDEAL OF A UNIVERSAL RELIGION	33
Re-interpretation of Hinduism	34
Seeds of Universalism in the Vedanta	36
The Challenge of Modern Science	39
A Religion for all Types of Men	41
IV THE FOURFOLD PATH OF REALIZATION	45
Karma-yōga	47
Bhakti-yōga	52
Jñāna-yōga	58
Rāja-yōga	62
V MODERN INDIA'S RESPONSE TO VIVEKANANDA	67
The Ramakrishna Math and Mission	67
Vivekananda's Influence on National Leaders	70
New Political Parties	74
VI A CRITIQUE OF VIVEKANANDA'S CENTRAL IDEAS	78
The Gospel of Hinduism	78
Religio-National Myths	81
BIBLIOGRAPHY	92

CHAPTER I
VIVEKANANDA AND HIS TIMES

Britain established her power firmly in India by the third quarter of the nineteenth century, with the subjugation of the Marathas and the Sikhs. British soldiers proved their superiority in their profession by crushing the revolt of 1857-58 in the Indian army. The East India Company transferred the government to the Crown after the revolt, which is called "the first war of independence" by some modern Indian historians. This transfer of power to the British Crown was the beginning of a new political unity in India. Uniform systems of administration, law and coinage enhanced this unity. As a result of this unity, Western culture made deep inroads into India when her own culture and national spirit had been at their lowest ebb. The inrush of a totally different civilization put an end to all creative work for a time, and uncritical admiration for all things Western took possession of the educated classes, coupled with contempt for things of native origin. They adopted Western ideas and habits, dress and mannerisms, and looked down on their fellow Indians.

But, fortunately, a reaction against the sweeping current of Western influence was not long in coming. It manifested itself in the growth of an intense nationalism during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It may be said that, if rationalism was the watchword of the first generation of English-educated Indians, that of the second gene-

ration was nationalism. It is difficult to determine whether Indian nationalism had its roots in the Hindu culture and tradition, or in the newly found knowledge of Western history and political thought. Whichever may be the source, nationalism became a powerful stream in many parts of India, especially in Bengal and Bombay.

Growth of Nationalism. In the early stages of its development, Indian nationalism as we understand it today did not exist at all. J. S. Mill defined nationalism as follows: "A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a nationality if they are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between them and any others, which made them co-operate with each other more willingly than with the other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be governed by themselves or a portion of them exclusively."¹ When we apply this definition to the Indian situation, India had several 'nationalisms', such as Bengali nationalism, Maratha nationalism etc., and each of these had only very little in common. It took the consolidated efforts of men like Raja Rammohan Roy, Mahadev Govinda Ranade, Bankim Chandra Chatterji and others to inculcate a sense of Indian-ness in the Indians at large, which is beyond the interests of regional culture and language.

The birth of Indian nationalism cannot be separated from reformation movements within Hinduism. Rammohan Roy, who is regarded "as the pioneer of organized political movement in India,"² was a religious

¹Quoted by R. C. Majumdar, History of the Freedom Movement in India, Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1963, Vol. 1, p.321.

²Ibid., p.313.

reformer more than a politician and a nationalist. Indian nationalism was Hindu nationalism to its core in the nineteenth century as well as in the early parts of the twentieth century. This intertwining of nationalism and religion was inevitable to a great extent. Indians took pride in their past. The works of early oriental scholars like Sir William Jones, Prinsep, Bothlingk and other Europeans contributed not a little to this spirit. Later, the writings of Max Müller, Wilson, Fergusson and others brought home to the educated Indians a very vivid picture of the past glory and greatness of ancient India, which placed her on the same pedestal as Greece or Rome. This inspired the Hindus with a sense of their rich heritage from the past and the leading part they once played as a great nation in the history of the world. The revelation of the past has become one of the foundations of Indian nationalism.

Nationalism and patriotism, even though in its modern form, is new to India, in its contents it is Vedic, argued the Hindu reformer. "In the Vedic literature we have a most remarkable passage in the Atharvaveda called the Prithvi Sukta, which is a string of about sixty-three impassioned hymns to the motherland. Praises are sung of the mother country as the land girt by the sea and fertilized by the rivers that pour down their bounty in streams of plenty, the land of hills and snowy mountains and forests giving protection to her sons unharassed, unsmitten, and unwounded."³ We see this sentiment expressed time and again in the ancient Sanskrit literature. In Viṣṇupurāṇa, Bharatavarsha is extolled "as the best of all countries" and goes as far as the deification of the motherland: "janani janmabhūmisca svargadapi gariyasi -

³Radha Kumud Mookerji, Nationalism in Hindu Culture, Chand, Delhi, 1957, p.13.

The Mother and Motherland are greater than Heaven itself."⁴

Hindu Reform Movements. The religious nature of Indian nationalism as seen above led the Indian leaders to the reformation of Hinduism. Raja Rammohan Roy was the first Indian leader who tried to reform Hinduism. He was a product of the age of rationalism, which dawned in India with the establishment of Western educational institutions. The most important result of the impact of Western culture and education was the replacement of blind faith in current traditions, beliefs and conventions by a spirit of rationalism which seeks to inquire and argue before accepting anything. The revolt of the mind against the tyranny of dogmas and traditional authorities, beliefs and customs, is the first requisite for freedom of thought and conscience which lies at the root of progress in social, religious and political spheres of life. Indeed this is the reason why progress in all these different spheres is interdependent. In Bengal the rationalizing effect of English education at first manifested itself more in religious and social ideas, but it was not long before it profoundly affected also the political consciousness of the people. The Brahma Samaj was the outcome of the first two, and it has often been claimed that it has contributed largely to the ideals of political freedom. It would perhaps be more correct to say that all the three are the results of the same rationalistic urge which was created by Western culture.

The greatest passion of Rammohan Roy's life was to wean his countrymen from the evils of Puranic Hinduism and to draw their atten-

⁴Ibid., p.16

tion to the original purity of the teaching of the Vedas.⁵ He fought tooth and nail against evil practices in Hinduism such as child marriage, sati, etc. He regarded image worship as against the teachings of the Vedas. The Raja also held that the belief in multiplicity of gods is not sanctioned by the Vedas. The Raja made "no secrets of the strong Theistic passions that ruled his life."⁶ This led him to a careful study of the Christian concept of God. But he found it difficult to accept the doctrine of Trinity. "His devotion to the truth of Monotheism which he held to be not less imperilled by Christian Trinitarianism than by Hindu polytheism, left him no option but to pursue the controversy."⁷ The result was that Rammohan Roy became a rebel and a free thinker in the eyes of his Christian and Hindu friends. The following statement by 'certain inhabitants of Berampur' in 1831 is an example of the conservative reaction to the Raja's teaching. "In the case of Rammohan Roy, how intelligent and man of talents he may be, yet from his late profession of belief in one God, in an irregular course, forsaking all religious rites, and ordinances of his caste, as a Brahmin, he is not accounted for among any regulated class of religions."⁸ In spite of this rejection by the orthodox, the Raja was not without any followers. His ideas were taken up by a number of English-educated persons, with whose co-operation the activities of the Brahma Samaj reached all the cultural centers of India.

⁵D. S. Sarma, Studies in the Renaissance of Hinduism, Hindu University Press, Benares, 1944, p.228

⁶Sophia Dobson Collet, The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohan Roy, Sadharana Brahmo Samaj, Calcutta, 1962, p.228.

⁷Ibid., p.136.

⁸Ibid., p.505.

The Brahma Samaj has inspired similar or parallel movements in other parts of India. The most important is the Arya Samaj, founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati in 1875. This movement took a very militant and fundamentalist turn and became the mouthpiece of Hindu communalists. Dayananda Saraswati had many things in common with Rammohan Roy, but the two movements parted their ways when the former insisted on the infallibility of the Vedas. While Brahma Samaj was a rationalist movement with a concern for reforming Hinduism, Arya Samaj aimed at the restoration of Hindu power in India, though it used revival within Hinduism as a means towards that goal. Dayananda found that both Christianity and Islam were making deep inroads, and this process should be stopped somehow. Christian and Islamic universalism is based upon the universality and infallibility of their scriptures, namely the Bible and the Koran, he came to believe. The Hindus had nothing like this in ancient or mediaeval times, and Dayananda therefore set up Vedic infallibility as the counterpart of the authority of the Bible and the infallibility of the Koran. It was upon this infallibility of the Vedas that he wanted to build up the Hindu society and the Hindu nation inspired with a great mission among the peoples of the world.

The Brahma Samaj was reduced to a moribund condition after the death of Rammohan Roy in 1833. New life came to the Samaj with the leadership of Devendra-nath Tagore. He framed a covenant for the church on the lines laid down by Rammohan Roy, and each devotee who accepted it had to declare that he would conform to the rules of the religious life laid down by the Vedanta and worship God daily by the Gayatri-mantra. The Samaj thus took a definite Hindu character and later in the course of a controversy with Christians (in 1845) the Vedas were publicly proclaimed

as its basis.⁹ The younger members of the Samaj were not very happy with the orthodoxy of Devendra-nath Tagore. They wanted to broaden the basis of Brahmaism by advocating new social ideals and insisted on applying the dry light of reason even to the fundamental articles of religious belief. To this group belonged Keshab-chandra Sen, who became a full-time missionary of the Samaj in 1861, and was elevated to the position of the Acharya in 1862. Under his dynamic leadership the Samaj became a very powerful factor in the religious life of India, and Bengal in particular.

The radical views of Keshab and his followers created a schism in the Brahma Samaj. Those who adhered to the "catholic and universal" nature of Brahmaism as preached by Keshab formed a new organization called "The Brahma Samaj of India". Devendra-nath and those who asserted that Brahmaism is Hinduism and remained in the old Samaj, were later known as the Adi Brahma Samaj. Keshab endeavoured to harmonize the apparently contradicting creeds of all religions. He deliberately eschewed politics; he and his followers "openly proclaimed loyalty to the British government as an article of the creed of his Church".¹⁰ This no doubt helped him to carry out his activities of social reform without any intervention from the ruling power. His programme of social reforms became a vital aspect of Indian Renaissance. Keshab exerted tremendous influence on the Indian youth of his day. Narendranath Datta, who later took the monastic name Vivekananda, the subject of our study, was one of the Bengali youths who came under Keshab's spell. But it was

⁹R. C. Majumdar, The History and Culture of the Indian People, Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, Bombay, 1965, Vol. 10, p.102.

¹⁰Ibid., p.104.

not Keshab who had the privilege of training this young man, who became the standard-bearer of neo-Hinduism in India as well as in the West. This great task was left to Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the saintly figure of Dakshinesvar, about five miles to the north of Calcutta.

Ramakrishna preached the old religion of India, which was founded on the Veda, more particularly on the Upanishads, and was systematized later on in the Sutras of Bādarāyaṇa, and finally developed in the commentaries of Śankara and others. The one great difference between Ramakrishna and other teachers of Vedānta was that his teaching was sprinkled with the mystic experiences he had in the Dakshinesvar temple, where he served as a priest. He had visions of Kālī, the mother goddess, whom he passionately worshipped. "He could not remain quiet with these frequent visions, but ran eagerly to attain perfection and realization of God in all His different aspects. He thus began the twelve years of unheard-of tapasya, or ascetic exercises. Looking back to these years of self-torture in his later days, he said, 'that a great religious tornado, as it were, raged within him during these years and made everything topsy-turvy'."¹¹ These visions led him to God-consciousness, which is unheard in the case of other religious leaders and reformers of modern India. Under the spell of his visions, he would speak of himself as being able to do and know everything and even declare himself to be the same soul that had been born before as Rama, as Krishna, as Jesus, or as Buddha.¹² During the period of his tapasya he had the tutelage of a number of persons belonging to different sects and religions. He was even initiated

¹¹Max Müller, Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings, Scribner, New York, 1899, p.41.

¹²Majumdar, op. cit., p.120.

into the Sufi doctrine of Islam and followed the rites of that religion. Later he practised similar sādhana according to Christian rites, and claimed to have had visions of Jesus Christ. One day "Ramakrishna was looking attentively at the picture of the Madonna with the Divine Child and reflecting on the wonderful life of Christ, when he felt as though the picture had become animated, and the rays of light were emanating from the figures of Mary and Christ and entering into him, altogether changing his outlook".¹³

Both by precept and example of his life, Ramakrishna brought home to an incredulous world, held under the spell of natural science, the reality of the spiritual world. He held that not only the different forms of Hindu religion, including the Puranic and Tantric, but all religions, such as Islam and Christianity, are true in their essence and may lead to salvation, if properly pursued. He worshipped Puranic deities through their images and proved to the Hindu reformers that worship of images was not incompatible with the highest spiritual development. He taught that many are the names of God, and infinite the forms that lead men to know Him. This teaching of Ramakrishna gave Hindu revivalism a moral sanction, a philosophical basis and a new spiritual significance of immense value.

Vivekananda's Tutelage Under Ramakrishna. Vivekananda began his active public life as a follower of Keshab-chandra Sen. The tenets of the Brahma Samaj gave this young rationalist some of the answers he was seeking for a long time. But he was still restless and reached almost the

¹³R. R. Diwaker, Paramahansa Sri Ramakrishna, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1964, p.151.

verge of scepticism.¹⁴ He had his great turning point in life when he accidentally met Ramakrishna in the house of a Brahma Samaj devotee. Ramakrishna became highly impressed by this young man and invited him to visit Dakshinesvar. Vivekananda described his first meeting with the master as follows: "He looked just like an ordinary man, with nothing remarkable about him. He used the most simple language and I thought, 'can this man be a great teacher?' I crept near to him and asked him the question I had been asking others all my life: 'Do you believe in God, sir?' 'Yes.' 'How?' 'Because I see him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense.' That impressed me at once. For the first time I had found a man who dared to say that he saw God, that religion was a reality, to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world".¹⁵ Vivekananda was awed and dazzled into admiration. Henceforth a true communion of soul began to take place between them. Ramakrishna initiated him into the mysteries of being. This idea of realization became in his afterlife, the chief tenet in his articles of belief. In the course of a lecture he said, "The best proof a Hindu sage gives about the soul, about God is, I have seen the soul, I have seen God".¹⁶ The second great lesson the Swami learnt from his master "is the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not contradictory nor antagonistic: they are but various phases of One

¹⁴Haridas Bhattacharyya, ed., The Cultural Heritage of India, Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta, 1956, Vol. 4, p. 94.

¹⁵Vivekananda, Complete Works, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1962, Vol. 4, p.179.

¹⁶Mannohan Ganguly, The Swami Vivekananda, a Study, Calcutta, 1962, p.31.

Eternal Religion".¹⁷ We will come to the Swami's exposition of this principle in the following chapters. Now, let us turn to Vivekananda's contribution to Indian nationalism.

Indian nationalism received a great momentum from the life and activities of Vivekananda, though he himself did not engage in any nationalist movement which had political undercurrents. He championed the cause of Hinduism in the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893. His learning and eloquence impressed that august body. The report of his success gave the Indian nationalists a sense of pride in their own tradition. Western nations hitherto looked down upon India as a land of superstitions and barbaric practices. Now, for the first time Western scholars and representatives of various religions greeted the principles of Hinduism as expounded by Vivekananda and accorded a high place to Indian culture and civilization. This helped the Hindu intelligentsia to overcome the inferiority complex, from which they have been suffering for a long time. When the Swami returned to India after the Parliament of Religions, a tumultuous welcome awaited him. His success in the West restored the self-confidence of the Hindus and quickened their sense of national pride and patriotism.

Vivekananda, the Patriot. On his return to India, Vivekananda preached the spiritual basis of Hindu civilization and pointed out in his writings and speeches that the spirituality of India was no less valuable, nor less important for the welfare of humanity, than the much vaunted material greatness of the West. He preached that the real values of the

¹⁷Vivekananda, op. cit., p.180.

Hindu ideals and institutions are superior to that of the West. He criticized the West in pungent terms: "On one side, New India is saying: 'If we only adopt Western ideas, Western language, Western food, Western dress and Western manners, we shall be powerful as the Western nations'; on the other side Old India is saying: 'Fools! by imitation, other's ideas never become one's own - nothing unless earned, is your own. Does the ass in the lion's skin become the lion?'"¹⁸ From one end of the country to the other he travelled exhorting the people of India to a new gospel in which the traditional spiritual values of the land mingled with an intense patriotic spirit. The following passage illustrates the intensity of his patriotism:

"Oh India! ... Wouldst thou attain, by means of thy disgraceful cowardice, that freedom deserved only by the brave and the heroic? Oh India! forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti; forget not that the God that thou worshippest is the great ascetic of ascetics, the all renouncing Śankara, the Lord of Uma; forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense pleasure, are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar; forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian and proudly proclaim, 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother.' Say, 'The ignorant Indian, the poor and the destitute Indian, the Brahmin

¹⁸Ibid., p.477.

Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother.' Thou too, clad with but a rag round thy loins proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice, 'The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God. India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age.' Say, brother, 'The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good,' and repeat and pray day and night, 'O Thou Lord of Gauri, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me. O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and - Make me a man.'¹⁹

One of Vivekananda's great disciples, Margaret Noble, who became Sister Nivedita, recalled his patriotic fervour: "Throughout those years, in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed". When Miss Noble decided to follow the Swami to India, he advised her, "You have to set yourself to Hinduize your thoughts, your needs, your conceptions and your habits. Your life internal and external, has to become all that an orthodox Brahmana Brahmacarini's ought to be. The method will come to you, if only you desire it sufficiently. But you have to forget your own past and to cause it to be forgotten. You have to lose even its memory."²⁰ One wonders whether this intense patriotism is really compatible with the universalism he often preached. His admirers explain away this contradiction by citing the common dictum that a person has to be a true nationalist first, if he wants to be an internationalist. But still the question lingers in one's mind and many

¹⁹Ibid., p.479 - 480.

²⁰Quoted by D. S. Sarma, op. cit., p.283.

patriotic utterances of Vivekananda no doubt crippled his universalism beyond any satisfactory explanation.

Vivekananda did not have any formal connection with nationalist or political movements. But his teachings had a direct bearing on the devotion to the motherland. His re-interpretation of the Vedanta as a religion far superior to any other system to meet the needs of modern India, won the hearts of many Indian nationalists. He pointed out that the fundamental concept of Vedanta was the essential unity of God and man and the realization of this truth by removing his ignorance. True worship of God, he maintained, is the service of the people whom we have hitherto neglected or trodden under foot. He therefore asked every Indian to realize God in the nation and to dedicate himself to the service, in a spirit of religious reverence, and without pride or fear, irrespective of all earthly consequences. He captured the imagination of the idealist young by this lofty ideal of service which was quite new to the Indian tradition. It was he who coined the term "Daridra-Narayana", i.e. the God symbolized by the poor and the humble and called upon Indians to serve this God.

Spiritualization of Indian Nationalism. Historians of Indian nationalism go as far as to call Swami Vivekananda the father of Indian nationalism. "He largely created it and also embodied in his own life its highest and noblest elements."²¹ He gave a spiritual basis to Indian nationalism. The lessons of Vedanta and the Bhagavad-Gita as he taught permeated the lives and activities of many a nationalist, and thus Indian

²¹Majumdar, op. cit., p.491.

nationalism took a definite Hindu character to the dismay of some nationalists who wanted to keep religious revival and nationalism separate.

This union of two streams was inevitable because of the historical situation in India. The British authorities in India were identified as Christians who tried to undermine the structure of the Hindu society, even though they themselves did not encourage Christian missionary activities. Several Christian missionary bodies were active in India during the latter half of the 19th century, and the Church was winning many new converts. In the field of modern education Christian missionaries were the pioneers and the educated Indian saw in Christianity a religion which met the demands of the modern age. This challenge was in the background of all nationalist and reform movements in India. The Hindu religious reformers were deeply aware of the power and influence of Christianity over the younger generation of Indians who were disappointed with their traditional religion. They sensed that Christianity is the religion of the modern man, even though they did not fully grasp the reasons behind its appeal.²² A reformer like Vivekananda faced the task of meeting this challenge by a new interpretation of the Vedanta as well as rousing patriotic sentiments. Revival of Hinduism and the creation of a national self-consciousness were inseparable objects in the

²²Mircea Eliade's description of Christianity is very relevant here. " ... Christianity is the 'religion' of modern man and historical man, of the man who simultaneously discovered personal freedom and continuous time (in place of cyclical time). It is even interesting to note that the existence of God forced itself far more urgently upon modern man, for whom history exists as such, as history and not as repetition, than upon the man of the archaic and traditional cultures, who, to defend himself from the terror of history, had at his disposition all the myths, rites, and customs ... " (Cosmos and History, the Myth of the Eternal Return, Harper & Row, New York, 1959, p.161.)

thought of many Indians. Interpreting this trend of thought in contemporary Hinduism, D. S. Sarma claimed: "Religion in its broadest sense, can no longer be isolated in any country from politics, economics, social and international relationships. The spirit of religion should hereafter animate not only the activities of the individual but also those of social groups and nations."²³

The Swami was also aware of the challenge of modern science and technology, which India had to face. He wrote: "We are to give as well as take from others. We should give our ancient spirituality and culture and get in return Western science, technology, methods of raising the standard of life, business integrity and technique of collective effort."²⁴ Here we see in the Swami, a forerunner of the present generation of Indian economists and politicians who speak of planned development and industrialization of India. Vivekananda was quick to realize that man in the West has effected a revolution in life through the discoveries of science and its application to the human race. In the attainment of power, in the creation of wealth, and in the amelioration of suffering, the contributions of science have to be reckoned as unparalleled. The Swami wanted India of his times, just emerging from pre-scientific and mediaeval conditions of life, to participate fully in the achievements and aspirations of the new age. But his main concern and mission was to endeavour to restore what he called "manhood" to the people of India. He believed that real strength will come only when India becomes spiritually self-conscious. Once he

²³D. S. Sarma, Hinduism Through the Ages, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1961, p.253.

²⁴Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 7, p.102.

described his own mission as follows. Answering the question "What do you consider to be the function of your movement as regards India", the Swami said: "To find a common basis of Hinduism and to awaken the national consciousness to them."²⁵ He found this common basis in the Vedanta. The historians of Hindu renaissance generally agree that Vivekananda was the first to introduce self-consciousness into Hinduism. "With Swami Vivekananda", wrote D. S. Sarma, "the modern Hindu Renaissance becomes self-conscious and adolescent."²⁶ This self-consciousness expressed itself not so much as an acumen for the study of the history of Hindu religion, as an interest in measuring Hinduism constantly with other religions, especially with Christianity. This was evident in the Swami's mission to the West and his presentation of Hinduism as a universal religion.

²⁵Quoted by K. M. Panikkar, The Foundations of New India, Allen & Unwin, London, 1963, p.31.

²⁶D. S. Sarma, Hinduism Through the Ages, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1961, p.155.

CHAPTER II

NEO-VEDANTA OF RAMAKRISHNA AND VIVEKANANDA

Three stages in the development of the Vedanta are generally distinguished by Indian scholars on the subject. The word 'Vedanta' literally means 'the end of the Vedas', and it primarily stood for the Upanishads, which form the concluding part of the Vedas. But subsequently it has come to mean the whole range of philosophical thoughts which developed out of the Upanishads. In this, the creative stage of the Vedic literature, (Śruti), chiefly consisting of the Upanishads, can be regarded as the basis of the Vedanta system. The second stage is that of the systematization represented by the Brahma-Sūtras of Bādarāyana, which arrange, harmonize and justify the ideas of the Upanishads. The third stage is that of interpretation and elaboration represented by the different commentaries on the Brahma-Sūtras and other works on them in which the ideas and arguments contained in the sutras are cast into proper philosophical form. The commentators attempted to prove their views (darśanās) by appealing to the authority of the texts as well as by independent reasoning. The result was that there appeared a number of schools of the Vedanta which hold different and conflicting views regarding Brahman, self, and the world. These different schools not only disputed one another, but entered into unmitigated quarreling and rivalry among themselves to denounce and demolish one another. This rivalry was unbearable to the synthesizing spirit of Ramakrishna, and he

attempted to reconcile the warring systems of thought. One can note three stages in the development of Ramakrishna's teachings. At first he taught that all forms of Vedanta, whether it is dualism, qualified non-dualism or non-dualism, are one. From this he proceeded to teach the unity of Hinduism. The culmination of his synthetic approach to religion was his declaration that all religions are one, they are expressions of the 'One Eternal Religion'. Ramakrishna taught the unity of religions not as a philosopher of religion, but as a mystic who experienced religion in its various forms.

Practical Vedanta of Ramakrishna. It is an extremely difficult task to determine how much of the neo-Vedantism as presented by the disciples of Ramakrishna was actually taught by Ramakrishna himself. He never wrote any book or gave any lectures as such. The most authoritative accounts of his teachings are embodied in The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, which is a record of his informal conversations with his disciples, by Mahendranath Gupta. In this Gospel we see only the basis of the neo-Vedanta, and it was left to Vivekananda to build the superstructure.

According to Ramakrishna, Brahman and Śakti or Kālī are not two different realities, unrelated to each other, nor are they different realities or existences inseparably related to each other or substance and or substance and quality. They are only two aspects of the same reality or two states of the same thing and, therefore, non-different (abheda). "The jñānis, who adhere to the non-dualistic philosophy of the Vedanta, say that the acts of creation, preservation, and destruction, the universe itself and all its living beings, are the manifestations of Śakti, the Divine Power ... Brahman and Śakti are identical. If you accept one, you must accept the other. It is like fire and its

power to burn ... The primordial power is ever at play. She is creating, preserving and destroying in play, as it were. This Power is called Kālī. Kālī is verily Brahman, and Brahman is verily Kālī. It is one and the same Reality."¹ This implies that Brahman or the Absolute in one aspect indeterminate and impersonal Being (nirguṇa) as the Advaita Vedantist holds, and in another is determinate and personal God (saguṇa) as the Viśiṣṭādvaitin and Dvaitin affirm. It also shows Ramakrishna's conviction in a Personal God, who is not an illusory appearance or a lower form of Brahman.

Ramakrishna taught that it is the same reality that is the nameless and formless Brahman for the jñāni, the Atman for the yogin and Bhagavan or Personal God for the bhakta. "The jñāni sticking to the path of knowledge, always reasons about the Reality, saying, 'Not this, not this'. Brahman is neither this nor that. It is neither the universe or its living beings ... What Brahman is cannot be described. This is the opinion of the jnanis ... But the bhaktas accept all the states of consciousness. They don't think of the world to be illusory, like a dream. They say that the universe is a manifestation of God's power and glory ... The yōgi seeks to realize the Paramātmān, the Supreme Soul. His ideal is the union of the embodied soul and the Supreme Soul ... But the Reality is one and the same. He who is Brahman is verily Ātman, and again He is the Bhagavan. He is Brahman to the followers of the path of knowledge, Paramatman to the yogis, and Bhagavan to the lovers of God."²

¹ Mahendranath Gupta, The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1964, p.63 - 64.

² Ibid., p.62.

Ramakrishna practised all these [^]yogas and he was successful in realising God through all these means. But he held that advaita-siddhi is the highest form of spiritual realization. "The Advaita is the last word in spiritual realization. It is something to be experienced only in Nirvikalpa Samādhi, for it transcends mind and speech."³ Ramakrishna had his lessons in Advaita Vedanta from Totapuri, a wandering guru. Within a few days the student attained the highest form of realization in Advaita discipline. In his bewilderment the teacher cried out: "Great God, it is nothing short of a miracle! It was undoubtedly a case of Nirvikalpa Samadhi - the culmination of advaita practice!"⁴ This position about the superiority of advaita-siddhi did not change his liberal attitude towards other systems, for in his thought they were not contradictory, but complementary. His mind was really synthetic: "When the Godhead is thought of as creating, preserving, and destroying, It is known as Personal God, Saguna Brahman, or the Primal Energy, Ādyasakti. Again, when it is thought as beyond the three gunas, then it is called Attributeless Reality, Nirguna Brahman, beyond speech and thought, this is the Supreme Brahman, Para-brahman."⁵

Ramakrishna integrated his experiences with the Kuṇḍalini yoga into his neo-Vedanta. Kuṇḍalini yoga is one of the yogas of the Tantric system. "This Yoga is effected by a process technically known as Ṣaṭ-cakra-bheda, or piercing the Six Centers or Regions (Cakra) or Lotuses

³Quoted by R. R. Diwakar, Paramahansa Sri Ramakrishna, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1964, p.149.

⁴Ibid., p.148.
Nirvikalpa samadhi means spiritual ecstasy, undisturbed by any ideation, and it is impossible to describe.

⁵Mahendranath Gupta, op. cit., p.153 - 154.

(padma) of the body by the agency of Kundalini-Sakti ... Kundala means coiled."⁶ The power (śakti) is described as lying coiled in the human body. "This Sakti is a Power of immense potentialities and when activated and set into full and overt operation it can lift man to the pinnacles of liberation into Bliss and knowledge."⁷ The six centers of the body are, mūlādhāra, svādhīsthāna, manipūra, anāhata, viśuddha, and ājñā. There is much similarity between the seven planes of consciousness described in the Vedānta and the sat-cakra mentioned above. "The Vedānta speaks of seven planes. The experiences in these planes differ from one another. The mind usually moves up and down in the three lowest planes. Its attention is fixed to the anus, the organ of generation and the navel - to eating, dressing, coition and the like. If, however, it happens to transcend those three planes and reaches the heart, one has the vision of light. But although it rises sometimes to the heart, the mind comes down to the three lower planes again. If anyone's mind goes up to the throat he cannot speak of any mundane topics. He will speak only of God ... If, however, anybody's mind reaches the spot between the eyebrows, he has no more fear of a fall. He then has direct knowledge of the Supreme Self and remains continually in Samādhi. There is only a screen, transparent like glass, separating this centre from the thousand-petalled lotus in the brain, the Sahasrāra. The Supreme Self is so near then that it seems as if one is merged in Him, identified with Him. But the identification is yet to be. If the mind comes down from here it

⁶ John Woodroffe, The Serpent Power, Ganesh, Madras, 1964, p.1.

⁷ M. P. Pandit, Kundalini Yoga, Ganesh, Madras, 1968, p.9.

comes at the most down to the throat or the heart. It cannot come down from this plane. After the experience of continuous samādhi for twenty-one days the screen is pierced and the oneness of the self with Him becomes complete. To be completely merged in the supreme self in the Sahasrāra is what is called reaching the seventh plane."⁸ This is a state of pure consciousness in which Brahman as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (Sat-Cit-Ānanda) is completely unified with Sakti or the divine power and nothing physical or mental exists. This implies that we get different revelations of reality from different levels of experience and that, at the highest level, there is a dissolution of the whole world of objects in one universal consciousness.

Spiritual realization was the keynote of Ramakrishna's teachings. "Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, nor names, nor sects, but that it means spiritual realization."⁹ This also gives us a glimpse of the practical application of Vedānta in his life and conduct. For him, it is Brahman as the Divine Mother that has become everything of the world. "Bondage and liberation are both of Her making. By Her māya worldly people become entangled in woman and gold, and again through Her grace they attain their liberation. She is called the Saviour, and the Remover of the bondage that binds one to the world."¹⁰ His practical Vedānta was a synthesis, or non-rejection, which defied all rules of ordinary logic. To an intimate group of disciples, including Narendra-

⁸Swami Saradananda, Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master, Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1963, p.365-366.

⁹Vivekananda, Complete Works, Vol. 4, p.187.

¹⁰Mahendranath Gupta, op. cit., p.65.

nath, he once told: "There are various paths to reach God. Each view is a path. It is like reaching the Kāli temple by different roads. But it must be said that some paths are clean and some dirty. It is good to travel on a clean path. Many views, many paths - and I have seen them all. But I don't enjoy them any more; they all quarrel ... I have come to the final realization that God is the Whole and I am a part of Him, that God is the Master and I am His servant. Furthermore, I think every now and then that He is I and I am He."¹¹ It was an easy reconciliation between Sankara and Ramanuja. He accepted all traditional beliefs such as, the law of karma, rebirth, incarnation, doctrine of grace, importance of a guru, one God as also many gods and goddesses, idol-worship and so on.¹² This was one of the reasons for his popularity with the conservative elements of Hinduism as against many other reformers of his period. At the same time the relevance of his new approach to the Vedānta attracted the younger generation who had been inspired by new national ideals. Swami Vivekananda took upon himself the task of giving logical and philosophical cohesion to the teachings of his master.

Vivekananda's New Approach. Vivekananda's new interpretation of Vedānta was motivated by his desire to revive Hinduism and to make it a religion acceptable to the modern man, whose outlook on life is very much influenced by the discoveries of modern science. For him Vedānta or Vedāntism meant Hinduism in all its depth. He was not very happy in accepting the term Hinduism to denote the religion of the Vedas. He said: "There is a word which has become very common as an appellation

¹¹Ibid., p.534.

¹²Diwakar, op. cit., p.214.

of our race and religion. The word 'Hindu' requires a little explanation in connection with what I mean by Vedantism. This word 'Hindu' was the name that the ancient Persians used to apply to the river 'Sindhu'. Whenever in Sanskrit there is an 'S', in ancient Persian it changes into 'H', so 'Sindhu' became 'Hindu'. Now this word Hindu as applied to the inhabitants of the other side of the Indus, has lost all its force in modern times, for all people that live on this side of the Indus no longer belong to one religion ... It is very hard therefore to find a common name for our religion, seeing that this religion is a collection, so to speak, of various religions, of various ideas, of various ceremonials and forms, all gathered together almost without a name, and without a church, and without an organization. The only point where perhaps all our sects agree is that we all believe in the scriptures - the Vedas ... Therefore perhaps the one name in modern times which would designate every Hindu throughout the land would be 'Vedantist' or 'Vaidik' as you may put it. And in that sense I always use the words 'Vedantism' and Vedanta."¹³

Following the footsteps of his master, Vivekananda synthesized the three schools of Vedanta, placing Advaita at the apex in the evolution of Vedantic thought. He declared: "This is my attempt, my mission in life, to show that the Vedantic schools are not contradictory, that they all necessitate each other, all fulfil each other, and one, as it were, is the stepping stone to the other, until the goal, the Advaita, the Tat Tvam Asi, is reached."¹⁴ He claimed that the life of Ramakrishna

¹³ Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 3, p.228-229.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.324.

was an interpretation of this harmony of the Vedantic schools. Beginning with this harmony of the Vedantic schools, he developed the idea that all the religious systems have their seeds in the Vedanta. In one of his letters, he explained his discovery. "Now I will tell you my discovery. All of religion is contained in the Vedanta, that is, in the three stages of the Vedanta philosophy, the Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Advaita, one comes after the other. These are the three stages of spiritual growth in man. Each one is necessary. This is the essential of all religion: the Vedanta applied to the various ethnic customs and creeds of India, is Hinduism. The first stage, i.e. Dvaita, applied to the ideas of the ethnic groups of Europe, is Christianity; as applied to the Semitic groups, Mohammedanism. The Advaita, as applied in its Yoga-perception form, is Buddhism etc. Now, by religion is meant the Vedanta, the applications must vary according to the different needs, surroundings, and other circumstances of different nations. You will find that, although the philosophy is the same, the Shaktas, Shaivas, etc., apply it each to their own special cult and forms."¹⁵

There is no doubt that the Swami was convinced that the Vedanta is the religion of the modern man, and preached that only Vedanta can save the world. Looking back to the history of India he said: "Advaita twice saved India from materialism."¹⁶ The reference is to Buddha and Śankara, who fought against the materialism of their days. Buddha stressed the moral side of the philosophy and Sankara the intellectual side. "He (Śankara) worked out, rationalized, and placed before men the

¹⁵Ibid., Vol. 5, p.82.

¹⁶Ibid., Vol. 2, p.138.

wonderful coherent system of Advaita." Vivekananda saw parallels between the materialistic tendencies of ancient India and modern Europe and prescribed Vedanta to the ills of Europe. "Materialism prevails in Europe today. You may pray for the salvation of modern sceptics, but they do not yield, they want reason. The salvation of Europe depends on a rationalistic religion, and Advaita - the non-duality, the Oneness, the idea of the Impersonal God - is the only religion that can have any hold on any intellectual people. It comes whenever religion seems to disappear and irreligion seems to prevail, and that is why it has taken ground in Europe and America."¹⁷

Advaita, the Only Rational Religion. The Swami always claimed that Vedanta is the most scientific and rational religion man has ever known. Time and again he asserted that the discoveries of modern science have proved Vedanta to be right. But to our dismay, he never discussed how this has been proved or on what grounds Vedanta established its superiority. We have only general statements from the Swami. "It seems clear that the conclusions of modern materialistic science can be acceptable, harmoniously with their religion, only to Vedantins or Hindus as they are called. It seems clear that modern materialism can hold its own and at the same time approach spirituality by taking up the conclusions of the Vedanta. It seems to us, and all who care to know, that the conclusions of modern science are the very conclusions the Vedanta reached ages ago; only in modern science they are written in the language and matter. This then is another claim of the Vedanta upon modern

¹⁷Ibid., p.139.

Western minds, its rationality, "the wonderful rationalism of the Vedanta."¹⁸ One has to say with regret that the Swami cites only a trivial example to prove his argument. A very learned Western scientist once attended his lectures with a keen interest. In a letter to his friend, E. T. Sturdy, the Swami pointed out that the cosmology of the Vedanta is in perfect unison with modern science, and promised that he will be writing a book on the subject. "... the Vedantic cosmology will be placed on the surest foundations. I am working a good deal now upon the cosmology and eschatology of the Vedanta. I clearly see their perfect unison with modern science, and the elucidation of the one will be followed by that of the other."¹⁹ Unfortunately he was not able to write the book he planned.

Vivekananda always exhorted his listeners to follow the supreme path of reason in their spiritual quest. "We should therefore follow reason, and also sympathise with those who do not come to any sort of belief, following reason."²⁰ He pointed his finger at religions which underrated the place of reason in matters of faith. "Taoists, Confucianists, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Mohammedans, Christians, and Zoroastrians all preached the golden rule and in almost same words; but only the Hindus have given the rationale, because they saw the reason. Man must love others because those others are himself. There is but one."²¹ In this line of interpretation of the Vedanta, Vivekananda attempted to

¹⁸Ibid., Vol. 3, p.185.

¹⁹Ibid., Vol. 5, p.101 - 102.

²⁰Ibid., Vol. 2, p.336

²¹Ibid., Vol. 7, p.96.

form a monistic basis for service to fellow men. Again, it was an answer to those who questioned the ethical basis of Hinduism as expounded in the various schools of Vedanta. In some of his lectures he has gone a step further, and claimed that only Hinduism has 'the eternal principle of truth as the sanction of ethics'. "And where is that eternal sanction to be found except in the only Infinite Reality that exists in you and in me and in all, in the Self, in the Soul? The infinite oneness of the Soul is the eternal sanction of all morality, that you and I are not only brothers, but that you and I are really one. This is the dictate of Indian philosophy. This oneness is the rationale of all ethics and all spirituality."²² No doubt, from this type of argument he came to the conclusion that Hinduism - Vedantism - is the most rational of all religions. "The monistic has this merit that it is the most rational of all religions that we can conceive of. Every other theory, every conception of God which is partial and little and personal is not rational."²³ This rational basis of religion is further augmented by pointing out that all the religions in the world, except Hinduism, depend upon the life or lives of some personal founder or founders. Hinduism alone is based on principles. The Vedas contain the eternal principles on which Hinduism is based. The authority of the Vedas is greater than that of any incarnation or the sage who uncovered the principles of the Vedas.²⁴ It is difficult to understand why the authority of the founder of a religion is less rational than that of the Vedas.

²²Ibid., Vol. 3, p.189

²³Ibid., Vol. 2, p.338

²⁴Ibid., Vol. 3, p.183.

It is puzzling to note that the Swami who insisted on the rational basis of Hinduism, also preached that the Vedas are eternal. One has to say that this teaching betrayed his attempt to patch up the age old beliefs of Hinduism with the demands of modernity. He said: "Perhaps all who are here will agree on the first point, that we believe the Vedas to be the eternal teachings of the secrets of religion. We all believe that this holy literature is without beginning and without end, coeval with nature, which is without beginning and without end, and that all our religious differences, all our religious struggles must end when we stand in the presence of that holy book; we are all agreed that this is the last court of appeal in all our spiritual differences."²⁵ When the Swami was questioned on the rationality of this teaching, he tried to explain away by saying that the law or the truth revealed by the Vedas to man is permanent and changeless. In this explanation he brought in the notion of revelation, which lies outside the domain of reason. Instead of a convincing answer we have only a counter question: "But no truth or law is absent from the Vedas, and I ask any one of you to point out to me any truth which is not treated of in them."²⁶

Vivekananda hoped that when Advaita is accepted as the religion of humanity, the conflict between science and religion will disappear for ever. "This (Advaita) is the one way that will prove acceptable to modern science, for it has almost come to it."²⁷ Romain Rolland, the

²⁵Ibid., Vol. 3, p.372 - 373.

This is not an isolated statement. He expressed the same view, whenever he spoke on the authority of the Vedas. cf. Ibid., pp.173, 183, 409, and Vol. 1, p.448 - 449.

²⁶Ibid., Vol. 5, p.206 - 207.

²⁷Ibid., Vol. 2, p.140.

sympathetic biographer of Vivekananda pointed out that this assertion - the idea of the Absolute as expounded by the Advaita is the only religion that can have any hold on intellectual people - is not true to the history of Europe. "The Absolute is the keystone of the great arch of Christian metaphysics as well as certain of the highest philosophies of the ancient world."²⁸

In all aspects of his interpretation of the Vedantic ideals, Vivekananda showed an intense awareness of the challenges it has to face. In the light of this, he clothed Vedantic ideas in modern terms. We can pick up examples of this attempt from all his writings and speeches. As an example, we will take his teaching on mukti or salvation. He referred to "two ideas of God that we find in our scriptures" and the consequent double concept of mukti. But he himself accepted the Advaita doctrine. "And, what are our relations with the impersonal Being? That we are He. We and He are one. Everyone is but manifestation of the Impersonal, the basis of all being, and misery consists in thinking of ourselves as different from the Infinite, Impersonal Being; and liberation consists in knowing our unity with the wonderful Impersonality."²⁹ The Advaita Vedanta admits jivan-mukti, or the possibility of salvation here and now, which the Monotheistic schools do not. Salvation here and now is definitely more appealing to a modern man than the promise of a heaven or paradise hereafter. "The aim and end in this life for the Jñāna-Yogi is to become this Jivanmukta, 'living-free'. He is Jivanmukta who can live in this world without being attached ... He

²⁸Romain Rolland, Prophets of New India, Cassell, London, 1930, p.438 - 439.

²⁹Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 3, p.129.

is the highest of all beings, for he has realized his identity with the Absolute, he has realized that he is one with God. So long as you think you have the least difference from God, fear will seize you, but when you have known that you are He, all of Him and the whole of Him, all fear ceases."³⁰ It is interesting to note the stress on the concept of freedom in his doctrine of mukti. He knew very well that freedom is a very dear concept to the modern man.

In the neo-Vedantism of both Ramakrishna and Vivekananda we see tendencies which are defensive and apologetic. It was not willing to concede that Hinduism was radically defective, as the theistic movements seemed to imply. Ramakrishna's emphasis was on a mystic self-culture. He also held that Hinduism stood for what was good and valuable in all religions, for they can all serve the common end of self-realization. Vivekananda's Vedantism, in the main, was concerned with a recovery of Hindu spirituality and protecting Indian culture from being submerged by "the materialism" of the West. He also pointed out, as we have seen above, that Vedanta provides the right religious motivation for service. He brought home to the Hindus that their age old Vedantism has a message to the world, and in fact their faith is superior to that of western nations. This marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of the reform movements in Hinduism.

³⁰ Ibid., p.11.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEAL OF A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

In the long history of Hinduism, it never has outgrown the stage of a national religion. It remained the religion of the people who lived on the other side of the river Sindu.¹ Buddhism, which was born out of revolt against the rigidity of the Hindu system, became a universal religion and spread all over Asia. The missionary nature of Buddhism did not help Hinduism to break the strong cultural structures with which it was closely interwoven. It only shows how difficult it is for a national religion to become a universal one. "National religion belongs to a given nation, is that nation's distinctive cultural expression, and tends to separate any nation the more definitely from other nations the more carefully it is practised."² As against this, a universal religion believes that it is fitted for acceptance by the whole world. Its universality is not quantitative but qualitative - though it may hope to achieve the former kind as well. "It believes that its truths and moral standards are universal because they illuminate the total meaning of life for all men."³ And a universal religion

¹Vivekananda, Complete Works, Vol. 3, p.120.

²Winston L. King, Introduction to Religion, Harper, New York, 1954, p.114.

³Ibid., p.115.

is not confined to any one group because it originated there. These religions became missionary religions because of their innate nature. Christianity and Islam came to India with their universal message and they won the hearts of many Indians. When these two religions took deep root in the Indian soil, Hinduism faced a challenge greater than ever before.

Re-interpretation of Hinduism. Vivekananda, who was a keen student of history, realized that the future of Hinduism lay in re-interpreting and reconstructing its teachings along universalistic lines. He saw that this was the only way to meet the challenges of Islam and Christianity, especially the latter, which was gaining new ground in India. His approach to the problem was basically synthetic, as we have seen in his new interpretation of the Vedanta. We may also recall that to him religion was nothing other than Vedanta in its many phases. "Religion must be studied on a broader basis than formerly. All narrow, limited fighting ideas of religion will have to go ... The religious ideals of the future must embrace all that exists in the world and is good and great, and at the same time have infinite scope for future development. All that was good in the past must be preserved; and the doors must be kept open for future additions to the already existing store. Religions must also be inclusive, and not look down with contempt upon one another, because their particular ideals of God are different. In my life, I have seen a great many spiritual men, a great many sensible persons, who did not believe in God at all, that is to say, not in our sense of the word. Perhaps they understood God better than we can ever do. The Personal idea of God or the Impersonal, the Infinite, Moral Law,

or the Ideal Man - then all have to come under the definition of religion."⁴

The Swami held the view that all the religions in the world are expressions of the 'One Eternal Religion'. The expression varies according to the intellectual and cultural climate of each country. "One Infinite Religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and this Religion is expressing itself in various countries, in various ways. Therefore we must respect all religions and we must try to accept them all as far as we can."⁵ This position leads to the question of the degree of truth and error in each religion. He answered: "Each religion, as it were, takes up one part of the great universal truth, and spends its whole force in embodying and typifying that truth."⁶ In his thinking, there was no error in any religion; only expressions of lesser truth. Our viewing of truth is coloured by our cultural and intellectual conditions. All the religions are different forces in the economy of God, working for the good of mankind. And Vivekananda frequently expressed his appreciation of the growing number of religious sects, for each one of them discovers some hidden aspect of the Eternal Religion. These sects are necessary steps in the evolution of religion, and can be of great help to many earnest religious seekers. "I am not against any sect. I am glad that sects exist, and I only wish they may go on multiplying more and more ... If we all thought alike, we should be like Egyptian mummies in a museum, looking vacantly at one another's

⁴Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.67 - 68.

⁵Ibid., Vol. 4, p.180.

⁶Ibid., Vol. 2, p.365.

face - no more than that ... Variation is the sign of life and it must be there."⁷

Seeds of Universalism in the Vedanta. The universal religion about which philosophers and others have dreamed already exists. "As the universal brotherhood of man is already existing, so also is universal religion."⁸ The deliverance of humanity depends on the acceptance of this religion. The highest goal of this religion is to lead man to that infinite freedom, which is God. God is not limited by time and space or the law of causation. He is changeless and eternal. But no human concept can claim to have represented God completely; no word is adequate to describe him completely. God's majesty surpasses everything we can know and imagine. He is the "neti, neti", not this, not this, of the Upanishads. This was the line in which he always developed his idea of God, moving from the familiar ground of the 'dualists' to his own Advaitic idea of nirguna Brahman.

This presentation of the Advaitic concept of God and religion was always followed by a challenge to accept all the religious ideas with an open heart. He struck a new chord when he spoke of acceptance, rather than toleration, which has been claimed to be a virtue of Hinduism. "Our watchword, then, will be acceptance, and not toleration. Not only toleration, for so-called toleration is often blasphemy, and I do not believe in it. I believe in acceptance. Why should I tolerate? Toleration means that I think you are wrong and I am just allowing you to live. I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all;

⁷Ibid., p.364.

⁸Ibid., p.367.

I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhist temple and take refuge in Buddha and his law." The Swami also expressed his openness to future religions. "Is God's book finished? Or is it still a continuous revelation going on? It is a marvellous book - these spiritual revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, and all other sacred books are but so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I would leave it open for all of them. We stand in the present but open ourselves to the infinite future."⁹ Later in this study we will examine how far Vivekananda lived up to this ideal of openness.

Vivekananda held that the concept of universal religion is as real as the concept of humanity. This abstract humanity does not require any proof for its existence. "If I am sure of anything, it is this humanity, which is common to us all. It is through this generalised entity that I see you as a man or a woman. So it is with this universal religion, which runs through all the various religions of the world, in the form of God; it must and does exist through eternity. 'I am the thread that runs through all these pearls', and each pearl is a religion and a sect thereof. Such are the different pearls, and the Lord is the thread that runs through all of them; only the majority of mankind are entirely unconscious of it."¹⁰ The content of this teaching is as old as the Bhagavad-gita, but Vivekananda deserves the credit for the emphasis.

⁹Ibid., p.374.

¹⁰Ibid., p.381.

From these generalizations about the universal religion and of the equality and acceptability of all religions, Vivekananda moved to narrate the peculiar nature of Hinduism. He claimed that those religions which are connected with the lives of their founders can never be universal religions. 'Location in place or time' for the beginnings of a religion, in his thinking, disqualified it for claiming to be a universal religion. (This is contrary to the widely accepted notion of a universal religion. When a religion has a message for the whole world, and its membership is open to any one irrespective of race and nationality, and it is fitted for acceptance by the whole world, it is called a universal religion¹¹). Hinduism is the only religion which does not depend on a founder, and therefore by implication it alone can become the universal religion. "Let me consider this question awhile and lay before you my reasons why I think that it is Vedanta, and Vedanta alone, that can become the universal religion of man, and that no other is fitted for the role. Excepting our own, almost all the other great religions are inevitably connected with the life or lives of their founders ... Every one of the great religions in the world, excepting our own, is built upon such historical characters, but ours rests upon principles. There is no man or woman who can claim to have created the Vedas. They are the embodiment of eternal principles, sages discovered them ..."¹²

In his famous address on Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago, Vivekananda made a passionate plea for accepting the exclusive universality of Hinduism. (This may sound rather contradictory

¹¹W. L. King, op. cit., p.114 - 118.

¹²Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 3, p.182 - 183.

for he was the first Hindu missionary who travelled the length and breadth of the United States, and Europe for that matter, and criticized Christianity for its exclusive claim as the revealed religion.) After a brief survey of the tenets of Hinduism he concluded: "The Hindu may have failed to carry out his plans, but if there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite, like the God it will preach, whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; ... which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for every human being ..."¹³ It is pretty obvious, which religion Vivekananda had in mind, when he specified a religion which has no 'location in place or time'.

The Challenge of Modern Science. Vivekananda delivered a powerful lecture on 'Reason and Religion' in England. In the course of this lecture he contended the claims of Christianity and Islam as universal religions. He said that these two religions cannot stand the test of modern science. The former, because of its claims to revelation, and the latter because of its dependence on the authority of the Koran. These religions deny the efficacy of any rationalistic investigation. The Bible, which is the record of God's revelation for the Christians, and the Koran, which is God's book for Islam, stand above the rationalistic investigations of modern science.¹⁴ Only Advaita can come out unharmed in an encounter with modern science, for both science and Advaita work on the same principles: the principles of sound reasoning. "The first

¹³Ibid., Vol. 1, p.19.

¹⁴Ibid., p.368.

principle of reasoning is that the particular is explained by the general until we come to the universal ... A second explanation of knowledge is that the explanation of a thing must come from inside and not from outside.... And religions are falling to pieces, because they cannot give a better explanation ... Can there be a religion satisfying these two principles? I think there can be. In the first place we have seen that we have to satisfy the principle of generalisation. The generalisation principle ought to be satisfied along with the principle of evolution. We have to come to an ultimate generalisation, which not only will be the most universal of all generalisations, but out of which everything else must come. It will be the same nature as the lowest effect; the cause, the highest, the ultimate, the primal cause, must be the same as the lowest and most distant of its effects, a series of evolutions. The Brahman of the Vedanta fulfils that condition, because Brahman is the last generalisation to which we can come. It has no attributes but is Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss - Absolute."¹⁵ Brahman is the great uniting force, the force that makes us one with everything that exists. Vedanta perfectly satisfies the second principles, viz. that the explanation of a thing comes from within. "The Brahman, the God of the Vedanta, has nothing outside Himself, nothing at all. All this indeed is He: He is in the universe: He is the universe Himself."¹⁶

Various religions in the world demonstrate certain aspects of the truth of the universal religion. As against this, Vedanta contains the sum total of all religious teachings. It does not disturb any other

¹⁵Ibid., p.371 - 372.

¹⁶Ibid., p.374.

faith. It tolerates, nay even accepts lower forms of worship. "This philosophy preaches a God who is a sum total. If you seek a universal religion which can apply to everyone, that religion must not be composed of only the parts, but it must always be their sum total and include all the degrees of religious development."¹⁷

A Religion for all Types of Men. Vivekananda saw three stages in the development of religion. First there is the stage where mythology plays the dominant role. This is the religion for the illiterate, the lowest types of men whose minds cannot grasp the lofty ideals of philosophy and religion. "These principles find expression in mythology - lives of saints or heroes, demi-gods, or gods, or divine beings; and the whole idea of mythology is that of power. And in the lower class of mythologies - the primitive - heroes are strong, gigantic. One hero conquers the whole world."¹⁸ The second stage is that of symbolism and ceremonies. Man approaches the deity through symbols. His conception of the deity becomes higher and it takes a moral content. He pleases his deity through ceremonies; through Karma. In the advanced types of this stage, Karma takes the form of good works. The third, and the most advanced stage, is that of philosophy. Here man realizes God through his knowledge, through introspection. "There is one advantage which can be pleaded for Vedanta, that in India, fortunately, these three stages have been sharply defined. In other religions the principles are so interwoven with the mythology that it is very hard to distinguish one from the other. The mythology stands supreme, swallowing up the principles; and

¹⁷Ibid., Vol. 2, p.141.

¹⁸Ibid., Vol. 6, p.6.

in the course of centuries the principles are lost sight of."¹⁹ The sharply defined stages in Hinduism are Dvaita, Vishishtādvaita, and Advaita. The principles, which are lost sight of in other religions, and at the same time underlie all religions, find their perfect expression in the Vedānta, which includes all the three above mentioned stages. "The gigantic principles, the scope, the plan of religion were already discovered ages ago when man found the last words, as they are called, of the Vedas - I am He - that there is that One in whom this whole universe of matter and mind finds its unity, whom they call God, or Brahman or Allah, or Jehovah, or any other name."²⁰

To the Swami religion meant realization. This was one of the great lessons he learnt from his master Ramakrishna. "Religion consists in realization. As a fact we know that nothing will satisfy us until we know the truth for ourselves."²¹ Each one has to discover the method which is most suited for him. This is the first principle of Vedānta. "Vedānta understands that and preaches the one principle and admits various methods. It has nothing to say against anyone - whether you are a Christian or a Buddhist or a Jew or a Hindu, whatever mythology you believe, whether you owe allegiance to the prophet of Nazareth, or of Mecca or of India, or of anyone else, whether you are a prophet - it has nothing to say. It only preaches the principle which is the background of every religion and of which all the prophets and saints and seers are illustrations and manifestations."²²

¹⁹Ibid., p.7.

²⁰Ibid., p.11.

²¹Ibid., Vol. 4, p.180.

²²Ibid., Vol. 6, p.17.

On the basis of the Vedāntic principles - which is to Vivekananda synonymous with universalism - Vivekananda put forward a plan for the realization of the ideal of a universal religion. "In the first place I would ask mankind to recognize this maxim, 'Do not destroy'. Iconoclastic reformers do no good to the world. Break not, pull not anything down, but build. Help if you can; if you cannot, fold your hands and stand by and see things go on ... Secondly, take man where he stands, and from there give him a lift. If it be true that God is the centre of all religions, and that each of us is moving towards Him along one of these radii, then it is certain that all of these must reach the centre. And at the centre, where all the radii meet, all our differences will cease; but until we reach there, differences must be. All the radii converge to the same centre."²³ After placing this plan before us, the Swami went on to say that most of the existing religions are one-sided. They do not satisfy all the religious needs of humanity: "Now a religion, to satisfy the largest proportion of mankind, must be able to supply food for all these various types of minds; and where this capability is wanting, the existing sects all become one sided."²⁴ This sounds like a disappointing situation. But Vivekananda came up with a quick solution to this predicament. "What I want to propogate is a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic and equally con-

²³Ibid., Vol. 2, p.385.

²⁴Ibid., p.386.

ductive to action."²⁵ He did not leave us in any doubt about the identity of this religion. It is Hinduism, based on the eternal principles of the Vedas.

Vivekananda taught how all the above mentioned four aspects of religion are harmoniously blended in Hinduism. "To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is my ideal of religion. And this religion is attained by what we, in India, call Yoga - union."²⁶ We will study Vivekananda's interpretation of the four-fold path - Rāja, Karma, Bhakti and Jñāna yogas - in the next chapter. But it is to be pointed out that, in Vivekananda's thinking, these paths are essential for the realization of a universal religion. In the development of this ideal there are obvious contradictions and fallacies. These contradictions, to a great extent, are inherent in the claims of Hinduism in general, and neo-Vedanta in particular.

²⁵Ibid., p.387.

²⁶Ibid., p.388.

CHAPTER IV

THE FOURFOLD PATH OF REALIZATION

Vivekananda taught that the 'ideal of a universal religion', which he passionately advocated, is to be realized through yoga. There are several types of yogas familiar to the Hindu, of which the Swami took the following: Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Jhāna-yoga and Rāja-yoga. He made these four yogas his four gospels for the liberation of man and his unity with the ultimate. "The term yoga, which is the cognate of the English yoke, means union with the ultimate reality, as also the way thereto."¹ Vivekananda, on the whole, accepted this meaning of the term yoga. However, because of his preference for Advaita Vedanta, in some of his lectures he changed the clause, union with the ultimate reality, to suit his emphasis. "Both the goal and the methods employed for reaching it (realization) are called Yoga, a word derived from the same Sanskrit root as the English 'yoke', meaning to join us to our reality, God."² It seems that the Swami was guarding himself against the common assumption that may derive out of the meaning of the term yoga, viz. that of another object with which to be yoked or united.

¹T. M. P. Mahadevan, "Social, ethical and spiritual values in Indian philosophy", The Indian Mind, ed. by C. A. Moore, Honolulu, 1967, p.166.

²Vivekananda, Complete Works, Vol. 5, p.292.

This was evidently the meaning yoga had in the dualistic schools of Vedanta; union with God, the Lord of the universe.

The yogas, as expounded by Vivekananda, are spiritual disciplines, such as Western philosophers have sought for in their "Discourse of Method", for the purpose of travelling along the straight way leading to truth. This straight way is the way of experiment and reason.³ The Swami was very emphatic on the rational aspect of the yogas. "No one of these Yogas gives up reason, no one of them asks you to be hoodwinked, or to deliver your reason into the hands of priests of any type whatsoever ... Each one of them tells you to cling to your reason, to hold fast to it."⁴ This insistence on reason is related to the Swami's interpretation of yoga as the science of religion. But one doubts whether this is true of some aspects of yoga, especially that of Bhakti-yoga, which, in his own words, is 'the religion of love'. It is doubtful whether there is any place for reason when the devotee expresses his love and faith in self-surrender (prapatti) to God and taking shelter in him (saranagati).⁵ All the four disciplines of yoga, according to the Swami, lead us to the same goal and make us perfect. They do not conflict with each other. "The Yogas of work, of wisdom and of devotion are all capable of serving as direct and independent means for the attainment of Moksa. 'Fools alone say that work and philosophy are different from each other, not the learned.'"⁶ These different disciplines offer a

³R. Rolland, Prophets of the New India, Cassell, London, 1930, p.381.

⁴Ibid., Vol. 2, p.388 - 389.

⁵Jadunath Sinha, A History of Indian Philosophy, Calcutta, 1956, Vol. 1, p.195 - 196.

⁶Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.93.

choice to men and each one can select the particular path which suits his aptitude.

Karma-yoga. The goal of every yoga is perfection and illumination through certain selected means, and the goal of Karma-yoga is moral perfection through a life of ceaseless action. To the Karma-yogi, (yogi is the one who practises yoga), action is the very essence of life. It unites the human will with the divine will. Action is better than inaction. Inaction is death. Action is life.⁷ Every individual is born with certain aptitudes and predispositions which constitute his innate nature, and determine his station in society. His special vocation (svadharma) in life is determined by his native endowment (svabhāva). He should perform his specific duties for the sake of his duty, without any desire for the fruits of his action. He can attain his highest personal good thereby, and contribute to the social good. He worships God through his own specific duties. This, in a nutshell, is the teaching of Bhagavad-gita on Karma-yoga.⁸ Vivekananda's exposition of the Karma-yoga, in the main, is based on the Bhagavad-gita.

The general view of the Advaitins, that knowledge and action cannot meet together, was not accepted by the Swami. On the other hand, he taught that action, understood in its proper spirit, can be synthesized very effectively with knowledge, and there is no antagonism between

⁷Na hi kaścīt kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt. Bhagavad-gita, III, 5.

⁸niyataṁ kuru karma tvaṁ karma jyāyo hy akarmaṇaḥ
śarīrayātrā 'pi ca te na prasīdhyed akarmaṇaḥ. Bhagavad-gita, III, 8.

sve-sve karmany abhirataḥ saṁsiddhim labhate naraḥ
svakarmānirataḥ siddhiṁ yathā vindati tac chrṇu. Bhagavad-gita, XVIII, 45.

the two. The important thing is that one should learn the secret of Karma-yoga. Action in itself is neither bad nor good. It becomes good or bad, efficacious for freedom or an obstacle to freedom, only due to purity or impurity of motive from which it springs. If the motive behind an action is selfish, it is bad; if the motive is wholly unselfish, the action is both good and conducive to spiritual freedom. But good and bad are bondages to the soul. "The solution reached in the Gita in regard to this bondage-producing nature of work is that, if we do not attach ourselves to the work we do, it will not have any binding effect on our soul."⁹ This non-attachment to work and its fruits is one of the central teachings of the Gita, which Vivekananda expounded in great detail.

A man who can control his inner forces will be able to attain this goal of non-attachment. To him, work becomes a means to the goal of liberation. A sensible man never thinks of building a house on the road. One should not let oneself be bound even with one's good works and their results. "Liberation means entire freedom - freedom from the bondage of good as well as from the bondage of evil. A golden chain is as much a chain as an iron one. There is a thorn in my finger, and I use another to take the first one out; and when I have taken it out, I throw both of them aside; I have no necessity for keeping the second thorn, because both are thorns after all. So the bad tendencies are to be counteracted by the good ones, and the bad impressions on the mind should be removed by the fresh waves of good ones, until all that is evil almost disappears, or is subdued and held in control in a corner of

⁹Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.53.

the mind; but after that the good tendencies have also to be conquered. Thus the 'attached' becomes the 'unattached'".¹⁰

How to accomplish this goal of non-attachment is the problem of the Karma-yogi. As a half-way house to that goal he accepts attachment to good. If this is only a temporary means, the Swami has no objections. But one should never lose sight of the ultimate goal. "Therefore be unattached. Let things work, let brain centers work; work incessantly, but let not a ripple conquer the mind. Work as if you were a stranger in the land, a sojourner. Remember that the whole nature is for the soul, not the soul for the nature. The very reason for nature's existence is for the education of the soul. It is there because that soul must have knowledge and through knowledge free itself. Instead we are thinking that the soul is for nature and that the spirit is for the flesh... The whole gist of this teaching is that you should work like a master and not as a slave. Work incessantly, but do not do the slave's work. Work through freedom! Work through love! Selfish work is slave's work. Each act of love brings happiness. Real existence, real knowledge, and real love are eternally connected with one another. With real love there is no painful reaction; love only brings a reaction of bliss."¹¹

Selfless service is an important aspect of Karma-yoga as interpreted by Vivekananda. The real Karma-yogi performs his duties with a spirit of self-sacrifice. To him, "the highest ideal is eternal and entire self-abnegation, where there is no 'I', but all is 'Thou'; and

¹⁰ Ibid., p.55 - 56.

¹¹ Ibid., p.56 - 57.

Karma-Yoga leads man to that end."¹² This led the Swami to establish a basis in Karma-yoga for charity. "... you see what Karma-yoga means; even at the point of death to help any one, without asking questions. Be cheated millions of times and never ask a question, and never think of what you are doing. Never vaunt of your gifts to the poor or expect their gratitude, but rather be grateful to them for giving you the occasion of practising charity to them."¹³ This idea of service to the poor is not found in the teachings of the Bhagavad-gita on Karma-yoga. On the other hand, in the Swami's teachings, work performed in the spirit of selfless service is nothing but a form of spiritual sādhana which is wholly beneficial to liberation. In his over-enthusiasm to prove the efficacy of Karma-yoga, (this over-enthusiasm is a common trait with the Swami,) he has gone so far as to declare: "The Karma-yogin need not believe in any doctrine whatsoever. He may not believe even in God, may not ask what his soul is, nor think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realizing selflessness; and he has to work it out himself. Every moment of life must be realization, because he has to solve by mere work, without the help of doctrine or theory, the very same problem to which the jñāni applies his reason and inspiration and bhakta his love."¹⁴

There is a whole chapter in Vivekananda's book Karma-Yoga, devoted to discussing the meaning of duty. But he did not give us any

¹²Ibid., p.85.

¹³Ibid., p.62.

¹⁴Ibid., p.111.

clear definition of duty, and his treatment of the subject was less than objective. "The term 'duty', like every other universal, abstract term, is impossible clearly to define, we can get only an idea of it by knowing its practical operations and results It is not the thing done that defines a duty ... Yet duty exists from the subjective side. Any action that makes us go Godward is a good action ... any action that go downward is evil ... There is, however, only one idea of duty which has been universally accepted by all mankind, of all ages and sects and countries, and that has been summed up in a Sanskrit aphorism thus. 'Do not injure any being; not injuring any being is virtue; injuring any being is sin.'"¹⁵ This is not the Bhagavad-gita idea of duty. The svadharma which the Gita specifies is one's caste duty. Arjuna as a Kṣatriya had to fight against his kinsfolk to protect the dharma. When he wavered in the battle-ground, Sri Krishna reminded him of his caste duty as a warrior. The Swami watered down the idea of caste duty, to the extent of doing violence to the teachings of the Gita. "Birth and position in life and in society largely determine the mental and moral attitude of individuals towards the various activities of life."¹⁶ In another place, he interpreted the meaning of duty in a still lighter vein. "What is duty after all? It is really the impulsion of the flesh, of our attachment, and when an attachment has become established, we call it duty."¹⁷ Here we see an apparent contradiction in the Swami's

¹⁵Ibid., p.63 - 64.

¹⁶Ibid., p.64.

¹⁷Ibid., p.103.

approach to the idea of duty (svadharma). To describe duty as "the impulsion of the flesh" is far from the teachings of Hinduism in general, and Bhagavad-gita in particular. His objection to the caste as a religious institution might have been one of the reasons for this kind of approach to the idea of duty. He said: "Beginning from Buddha down to Rammohan Roy, every one made the mistake of holding caste to be religious institution ... But in spite of all the ravings of the priests, caste is simply a crystallized social institution, which after doing its service is now filling the atmosphere of India with stench."¹⁸ But the Swami did not back up this statement with the teachings of the Vedas or that of the 'tradition' (smṛti).

Bhakti-yoga. Bhakti-yoga is the union of the finite soul with the Supreme soul through devotion. Bhakti is the most intense attachment or supreme love for God. The path of devotion is the approach to the saguna Brahman. "It is characterized by the aspirant's awareness of his relationship with Brahman. Both Nondualistic and Monotheistic Vedanta recognize the path of devotion as the direct way to the realization of Saguna Brahman. According to Monotheistic Vedanta it is the final spiritual course. But nondualistic Vedanta holds that the path of devotion leads to the path of knowledge, which is the only direct way to the realization of Nirguna Brahman. Most spiritual aspirants must attain Saguna Brahman through devotion before they can reach the Nirguna."¹⁹ This interpretation of Bhakti-yoga by Swami Satprakashananda is a very

¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. 5, p.22 - 23.

¹⁹ Swami Satprakashananda, Methods of Knowledge, London, 1965, p.321.

good summary of Vivekananda's position.

Bhagavad-gita is one of the main sources of Bhakti-yoga. Besides the Gita, the Swami, for his interpretation of bhakti, used the Bhagavata-purana, Bhakti-sutras of Narada and various Upanishadic passages. The Gita view of bhakti can be summarized as follows. Bhakti is the nectar which makes one immortal. Love of God is ineffable. It is indescribable like the taste of a dumb person. It is single-minded and unswerving devotion to God.²⁰ God cannot be attained by the study of the Vedas, by austerities, charity or sacrifices. He can be attained by single-minded devotion only.²¹ Devotion generates knowledge of God. The devotee knows God through devotion and enters into him.²² Those who take refuge in God can cross the impassable ocean of maya composed of sattva, rajas, and tamas, realize their trans-empirical spiritual nature, and attain moksa through his grace. Moksa is affinity with God, eternal peace, infinite bliss.²³ Sri Krishna exhorted Arjuna: "Give up all dharmas and take refuge in me alone. Grieve not. I will deliver thee from all sins."²⁴

²⁰ mām ca yo 'vybhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate. Bhagavad-gita, XIV, 26.

²¹ bhaktyā tv ananyayā śakya aham evaṁvidho 'rjuna
jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca parāntapa. Ibid.,
XI, 54.

²² Ibid., XVIII, 55.

²³ Ibid., VII, 14., XVIII, 56.

²⁴ sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvā sarvapapebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā sucaḥ. Ibid., XVIII, 66.

Vivekananda christened Bhakti-yoga as the 'Religion of Love' for his Western readers. This is essentially the yoga of love. We are all lovers, more or less. As husbands and wives, as children and parents, as brothers and sisters, in all sorts of social relations we deal in love. This love, if properly developed, will take us Godward. This was the Swami's teaching. "Wherever there is love, it is He the Lord who is present there. Where the husband kisses the wife, He is there in the kiss. Where the mother kisses the child, He is there in the kiss. Where friends clasp hands, He the Lord is present as the God of Love. When a great man loves and wishes to help mankind, He is there giving all his bounty out of His love to mankind. Wherever the heart expands, He is there manifested."²⁵ Bhakti-yoga is the yoga for the emotional type of man. It is the heart, feeling emotion that leads a man to salvation. It is the motor power that propels a man's samskaras to purification and perfection.

The Swami was aware of both the strength and weakness of bhakti. It being the easiest and the natural way, it attracts many people, who are not disciplined in any way. In the way of bhakti, they find emotional satisfaction and become quite fanatic about their sect or cult. They will never be able to appreciate any other view of religion than theirs. This is one of the dangers of the bhakti-cults. "The fanatical crew in Hinduism, or Mahomedanism or Christianity have always been almost exclusively recruited from these worshippers on the lower planes of Bhakti. That singleness of attachment to a loved object without which no genuine love can grow, is very often also the cause of denun-

²⁵Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.393 - 394.

ciation of everything else. All the weak and undeveloped minds in every religion or country have only one way of loving their ideal, i.e., by hating every other ideal."²⁶

There have been fierce controversies that have raged over the comparative merits of Jñāna-yoga and Bhakti-yoga. The extreme partisans among the bhaktas hold that the highest state of realization comes through love and devotion alone and triumphantly quote the words of Sri Krishna to Arjuna: "Through devotion he knows Me truly, what and who I am. Then, having known Me truly, he forthwith enters into Me."²⁷ The advocates of Jñāna-yoga, on the contrary, point out that the highest state of bhakti after all gives knowledge, and that knowledge (jñāna) is the goal of humanity. They have the same verse as their authority. This age-long controversy can never be ended so long as both of them talk from the lower plane. The synthetic mind of the Swami saw this controversy as meaningless. "There is a little difference in opinion between the teachers of knowledge and those of Love, though both admit the power of Bhakti. The Jñānis hold Bhakti to be an instrument of liberation, the Bhaktas look upon it both as the instrument and the thing to be attained. To my mind this is a distinction without much difference. In fact, Bhakti, when used as an instrument, really means a lower form of worship and the higher form becomes inseparable from the lower form of realization at a later stage. Each seems to lay a great stress upon his own peculiar method of worship, forgetting that, with perfect love, true

²⁶ Ibid., Vol. 3, p.32.

²⁷ bhaktyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cā 'smi tattvataḥ
tato mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tadanantaram. Bhagavad-
gita, XVIII, 55.

love is inseparable."²⁸

The various Puranas, especially Bhagavata Purana and Brahmavivarta Purana, popularized bhakti as the great path which led to liberation. These two Puranas preached the worship of Krishna as the Supreme Lord, and the bhakti cult became a very powerful movement within Hinduism. Bhagavata Purana taught that pure bhakti is unmotivated, immediate and spontaneous. "It is constant and uninterrupted devotion to God, which spontaneously surges up the heart of a devotee. Spontaneous and unmotivated devotion to God does not seek identity (ekatmata) with him. It seeks service of God and action for his delight ... It leads to eternal Communion with God and to his service."²⁹ Worship of the supreme Lord in images had an important place in the Puranic teachings. "Bhagavata takes into consideration right types of images. It may be made of permanent stuff - stone, wood, iron or crystal - or of purely temporary material like sand. Or, the image may just be a picture or a relief (lekhya). Or, it need not be made of physical stuff at all. The mind can form its own image of God. The procedure of working varies according to the stuff of God's body and the capacity of the worshipper; and in case of the mental image of God nothing but pure devotion is necessary."³⁰

Vivekananda incorporated almost all forms of popular religion and worship into his interpretation of the Bhakti-yoga. He admitted that Ishvara is the object of worship. In this worship, symbols,

²⁸Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 3, p.78.

²⁹J. Sinha, op. cit., p.167.

³⁰Siddhesvara Bhattacharya, The Philosophy of the Srimad Bhagavata, Visvabharati, Santiniketan, 1962, Vol. 2, p.200.

(pratika), images (pratima), chosen ideal (Ishta-Nishta), mantras, incarnations of Vishnu, and all other forms of popular Hinduism find a place. The Bhakti-yoga as he interpreted it is a synthesis of Vedic and Puranic forms of Hinduism. He held that Bhakti-yoga is dualistic. "We all have to begin as dualists in the religion of love. God is a separate Being, and we feel ourselves to be separate beings also. Love then comes in the middle, and man begins to approach God, and God also comes nearer and nearer to man."³¹ Finally, the bhakta comes to the realization that he belongs to God. 'I am His', is the realization of the bhakta as against the 'I am He' of the jñāni. The Swami, whose personal leanings were towards Jñāna-yoga, taught that the 'dualism' of Bhakti-yoga in the end lead the devotee to non-dualism. "At last, however, comes the full blaze of Light, in which this little self is seen to have become one with the Infinite. Man himself is transfigured in the presence of this Light of Love, and he realizes at last the beautiful and inspiring truth that Love, the Lover, and the Beloved are One."³² It may be pointed out that some of the assumptions on which the Swami based his conclusions are questionable. The 'religion of Love' is not 'dualistic', just because the bhakta worships God as a separate Being. The bhakta does not affirm that he is a being in his own right. He knows that he is sustained by the grace of God. The Swami's conclusion that "the Lover and the Beloved are One" appears too quick. This relationship of love (bhakti) is possible without losing the identity of the bhakta. As we have seen above,

³¹ Vivekananda, op. cit., p.100.

³² Ibid., p.100.

the bhakta does not seek identity (ekatmata) with God. His goal is eternal communion with his Beloved.

Jñāna-yoga. Jñāna-yoga is the union of the finite self with the infinite self through intuition. The Bhagavad-gita taught that there are three degrees of knowledge, Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika. Sāttvika knowledge is the knowledge by which one sees the one Indestructible Reality in all existence.³³ Rājasika knowledge is the knowledge by which one sees in all creatures different entities of distinct kinds.³⁴ Tāmasika knowledge is the knowledge which is confined to one single effect as if it were all, without reason, without a foundation upon truth, and narrow.³⁵ The sāttvika knowledge is the knowledge of unity in plurality with a stress on unity. It is integral knowledge. God is one and undivided and still exists in diverse creatures as if divided.³⁶ The Jñāna-yogi unites his self with Brahman with a completely pacified mind untainted by all impurities and enjoys infinite bliss. He acquires a mystic vision of the supreme self or God in all creatures and all creatures in God, enters into unity with God.³⁷ This is the central teaching of the Bhagavad-gita on Jnana-yoga.

³³sarvabhūteṣu yenai 'kaṁ bhāvam avyayam īkṣate
avibhaktaṁ vibhakteṣu taj jñānaṁ viddhi sāttvikam. Bhagavad-
gita, XVIII, 20.

³⁴prthaktvena tu yaj jñānaṁ nānābhāvaṁ prthagvidhān
vetti sarveṣu bhūteṣu taj jñānaṁ viddhi rājasam. Ibid., XVIII,
21.

³⁵yat tu kṛtsnavad ekāsmīn kārye saktam ahetukam
atattvārthavad alpaṁ ca tat tāmasam udāhṛtam. Ibid., XVIII, 22.

³⁶avibhaktaṁ ca bhūteṣu vibhaktaṁ iva ca sthitam
bhūtabharty ca taj jñeyam grasiṣṇu prabhaviṣṇu ca. Ibid.,
XIII, 16.

³⁷Ibid., VI, 28 - 31.

Vivekananda presented Jñāna-yoga as the highest method for realization. This is the yoga for the philosopher, the thinker, who wants to go beyond the visible. "Not even all the sciences will satisfy him; at best, they only bring this little world before him ... His soul wants to go beyond all that into the very heart of being, by seeing Reality as It is; by realizing It, by being It, by becoming one with the Universal Being ... To him, God is the life of his life, the soul of his soul. God is his own Self."³⁸

The Swami taught that the first step of the Jñāna-yogi is to co-ordinate his thoughts with higher ethics. After this is done comes the subtler question of thought control with special reference to drawing of the mind to the senses. In a sense the co-ordination of thought even with higher ethics forms a part of this subject, but it can be easily differentiated as being the more manifestable. The mind must maintain its poise and equilibrium not only between the pairs of merit and sin, virtue and vice, which all come under the category of higher ethics, but also between the pairs of heat and cold, happiness and misery, honour and censure. These pairs too, like the pairs of virtue and sin and the like, have to deal with the drawing of the mind towards the senses, but in the case of the latter the drawing of the mind forms essentially an ethical question, while in the case of the former they form an essentially subtler and more refined struggle which has nothing to do with the canons of ethics. It is here that the Jñāna-yogi has to struggle most, longest, and most perseveringly. His life becomes a perpetual denial of what is ordinarily lived, sensed, felt and willed.

³⁸Vivekananda, op. cit., p.394.

Of all the yogas, Jñāna-yoga is the one particularly accepted by the Advaitins. According to them, it is through māya, metaphysical ignorance, inscrutable to the finite mind, that the infinite Brahman appears as the finite universe. The Vedanta states, further, that there are two orders of experience. From the transcendental standpoint, the illumined soul experiences unity, which includes his own self. From the empirical standpoint, the ordinary man experiences multiplicity and sees himself as the perceiver. No relationship exists between the Infinite and the finite, the One and the many, because they belong to two entirely different levels of experience. If any one seeks to establish such a relationship, the Advaitin calls it the result of māya. One can find a relationship between two things perceived to exist at the same time. But when the One alone is perceived to exist, the many are non-existent, and vice versa. According to the Swami's interpretation, it is the One that appears as the many, the Absolute that appears as the relative. This is māya. "Māya is not a theory for the explanation of the world. It is simply a statement of facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being is contradiction, everywhere we have to move through this tremendous contradiction, that wherever there is life, death must follow as its shadow, and every one who smiles will have to weep, and whoever weeps must smile also."³⁹

When the Jñāna-yogi attains the knowledge of the physical and moral harmony and unity of the world, he becomes jñāni. He reaches a stage higher than ordinary mortals. He looks at the whole world and also at himself from such a lofty, ethereal, noble view-point, that all

³⁹Ibid., Vol. 2, p.105.

elements of littleness, weakness, vanish and he is as it were one with the everlasting and the Universal. Vivekananda described this state of the jnani as follows: "He alone lives, whose life is in the whole universe and the more we concentrate our lives on limited things, the faster we go towards death. Those moments alone we live when our lives are in the universe, in others; and living this little life is death, simply death and that is why the fear of death comes. The fear of death can only be conquered when man realizes that so long as there is one life in the universe, he is living. When he can say 'I am in everything, in everybody, I am in all lives, I am the universe' then alone comes the state of fearlessness. It is only the spirit that is the individual because it is infinite. The apparent man is merely a struggle to express, to manifest this individuality."⁴⁰ The concept of individuality expressed in these lines is difficult to follow. One wonders how the union of the individual self with the Supreme Self becomes the manifestation of individuality. It would have been easier to understand, in the light of the teachings of Advaita, had the Swami stated that the individual loses his identity when he realizes his oneness with Brahman. Our idea of individuality, as William James put it, "is the one thing that fills up the measure of our concrete actuality, and any would-be existent that should lack such a feeling, or its analogue, would be a piece of reality only half made up."⁴¹

A person who realizes his unity with Brahman, one who declares:

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.80.

⁴¹ William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, Longmans, London, 1912, p.499.

"I am He, I am He", is called Jivan-mukta. This is the state, according to the Swami, where a man enjoys freedom, though still living in a human body. The Jivan-mukta is free from all earthly bondages. He is the one who has broken the power of cosmic forces to which he has been exposed. To become free while living on earth is the goal of the Advaitin.

Raja-yoga. Rāja-yoga is different from the three yogas we discussed above in that its philosophical presuppositions are different. The three yogas, karma, bhakti and jñāna, are Vedantic in origin. They all accept the Vedantic view of the world and God in general, though each of them have peculiar affinity to certain schools of the Vedanta. They are paths (mārgās) to the realization of the ultimate. Rāja-yoga, on the other hand, is based on the Yoga philosophy of Patanjali, which is one of the six orthodox schools (darśanas) of Indian philosophy.⁴²

Patanjali developed his system of Yoga in relation to the Sāṃkhya system of Kapila. Kapila's system advocated dualism, pluralism and atheism. It is dualistic in that it maintains two ultimate principles: puruṣa (the self-intelligent subject) and prakṛti (the non-intelligent potential cause of the universe).⁴³ Both are eternal. The Sāṃkhya teaches spiritualistic pluralism and rejects the notion of God as creator of the world. Patanjali engrafted the concept of God upon the Sāṃkhya dualism of prakṛti and puruṣas and made it theistic. Puruṣas are eternal, conscious and immutable. Prakṛti is eternal, unconscious and mutable. "God upsets the equilibrium of sattva, rajas and tamas by mere proximity, and starts

⁴²The six darsanas are Nyaya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yōga, Mīmāṃsa and Vedānta.

⁴³Swami Satprakashananda, op. cit., p.314.

the evolution of prakṛti. He directs its evolution as the efficient cause of modifications of sattva, rajas and tamas into the various kinds of physical, biological and psychical entities by removing barriers to their production."⁴⁴ Patanjali's God is not the creator of prakṛti, or of the individual soul. He is not the ultimate reality of the Vedānta. Those who practice yoga can attain liberation without meditation on God. He only helps an aspirant practice the art of yoga by removing impediments to it. Patanjali prescribed the eightfold path of yoga for liberation: "The eight means of yoga are: the Commandments or Yama, the Rules or Niyama, posture or Āsana, right control of life-force or Prāṇāyama, abstraction or Pratyahara, attention or Dhāraṇa, meditation or Dhyāna, and contemplation or Samādhi."⁴⁵

Vivekananda accepted the Yoga-sūtras of Patanjali as the highest authority for his interpretation of Rāja-yoga. We have the Swami's translation and a running commentary of the Yoga aphorisms of Patanjali. He admitted Patanjali's concept of God as the "Teacher of even the ancient teachers, being not limited by time."⁴⁶ But, in his commentary, we can see attempts to baptize this concept, to fit it into his Vedantic idea of God as the Absolute. "We are forced to admit, as a last conclusion, one teacher, who is not limited by time, and that One Teacher of infinite knowledge, without beginning or end, is called God."⁴⁷ Again in his interpretation of the word Om (Yoga-sūtra I. 27), he

⁴⁴J. Sinha, op. cit., p.212.

⁴⁵Patañjali, Yoga-sūtra, II. 29.

⁴⁶Ibid., p.219 - 220.

⁴⁷Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.217.

brought in the Vedantic ideas of God.⁴⁸ In another context the Swami said: "For those who believe in God, a symbolical name, such as Om, or other sacred words received from a Guru, will be very helpful. Om is the greatest, meaning the Absolute."⁴⁹ The Swami's acceptance of the yoga system of Patanjali, as the "science of religion", even though it is in perfect agreement with his synthetic approach, has no sanction from the Vedas. Sankaracharya, the great exponent of Advaita, denied the self-sufficiency of Rāja-yoga as a means of liberation. "Only Śruti can lead to liberation."⁵⁰

In his lectures on the Rāja-yoga, the Swami taught that it is a discipline by which the direct experience of ultimate reality is made possible. It is a practical and rational method, tested time and again by Indian philosophers. Every science has formulated its own discipline. No man can be called a true philosopher if he only believes in a theory but has not directly experienced the object of knowledge. Untested philosophical beliefs are no more trustworthy than untested scientific hypotheses. The goal of Patanjali's yoga is samādhi, which is "realization of the self as an entirely pure and free spirit."⁵¹ This is a step short of Vivekananda's object, i.e. direct experience of the ultimate reality.

Besides Patanjali's Yoga-sutra, Vivekananda made use of the teachings of the Upanishads and Puranas, especially that of Kurma-Purana, to

⁴⁸Ibid., p.219 - 220.

⁴⁹Ibid., Vol. 8, p.154.

⁵⁰Sankaracharya, Vedanta-sutra-bhashya, II. 1. 3.

⁵¹J. Sinha, op. cit., p.212.

build his system of Rāja-yoga. He has even incorporated one of the Tantric yogas, i.e. Kundalini-yōga to which we made reference elsewhere in this study. All these forms of yogas have got one thing in common: concentration. This is the key word in Rāja-yoga. Concentration is the sole method by which to learn the secrets both of the outer and of the inner world. Rāja-yoga develops the innate powers of the mind through concentration, focuses them on the mind itself, and then analyzes its true nature. One can be a yogi whether or not one accepts any form of religious belief. Any one can practise yoga and discover the ultimate nature of things. The Swami insisted that through Rāja-yoga it can be demonstrated that genuine religious experiences are as valid as scientific truths. In his over-enthusiasm, the Swami declared: "... Raja-yoga is the science of religion, the rationale of all worship, all prayers, forms, ceremonies, and miracles."⁵²

The Swami knew very well that the scientific colour of Raja-yoga appealed to the Western scientific spirit. He wanted the Westerner to give it a chance and investigate it as they would investigate astronomy, chemistry and the like. He appealed to their best elements. "The science of Rāja-yoga proposes to put before humanity a practical and scientifically worked out method of reaching the truth ... Each science must have its own methods. I could preach you thousands of sermons, but they would not make you religious, until you practised the method. These are the truths of the sages of all countries, of all ages, of men pure and unselfish, who had no motive but to do good to the world. They all declare

⁵²Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.165.

that they all found some truth higher than what the senses can bring to us, and they invite verification. They ask us to take up the method, and then if we do not find this higher truth, we shall have the right to say that there is no truth in the claim; but before we have done that, we are not rational in denying the truth of their assertions."⁵³ In this statement we can see the strong influence of the empiricism of the British philosophers on Vivekananda. To limit the scope of our rational enquiry to our experiences is not rational at all. Besides personal experience, there are universally accepted methods of verifying the validity of a system.

The Swami warned his listeners that there will be many difficulties on the path of a Raja-yogi. The latent tendencies of the mind will create obstacles to concentration. With complete non-attachment to any objects and strict discipline of the body, one can conquer all the obstacles. The various disciplines given by Patanjali help the yogi in his pursuit. At last, by a supreme act of the will, the yogi realizes his freedom and the reality that lies behind the body and the senses. This state is called samādhi.

The four yogas we discussed above were the major subject matter of Vivekananda's writings and lectures. He synthesized and reconciled various aspects of these yogas, which were at odds, and presented them as the means of realizing the universal religion. He prescribed the path of karma for the active, bhakti for the emotional, jnana for the intellectual and Raja-yoga for the psychic or introspective types of men.

⁵³Ibid., p.128 - 129.

CHAPTER V

MODERN INDIA'S RESPONSE TO VIVEKANANDA

It is a human tendency to fix labels to a man when he achieves certain fame and creates an aura of greatness. When Vivekananda returned to India in 1897 after his successful mission in the West he was acclaimed as the champion of Hinduism, the 'Patriot-Saint', the social reformer, and so on. All these labels are appropriate, because the Swami's interests and concerns touched many facets of Indian life. The Hindu believer found a defender of his faith in the Swami. The nationalist and the radical reformer found inspiration in his speeches and writings. As the Swami himself interpreted Hinduism as the religion for all types of men, his personality attracted men from different walks of life. In this chapter we will examine the influence Vivekananda had on the religious, social and political movements of modern India.

The Ramakrishna Math and Mission. The Hindu Indian saw in Vivekananda's works "not only a gospel to the world at large, but also to its own children, the Charter of the Hindu Faith". "What Hinduism needed", wrote Margaret Noble in her introduction to the Complete Works of Vivekananda, "amidst the general disintegration of the modern era, was a rock where she could lie at anchor, an authoritative utterance in which

she might recognize herself."¹ To propagate the ideals of Hinduism as taught by Sri Ramakrishna, and to fulfil the needs of Hinduism in the modern age, Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, in 1886. The way in which the Math was formed is worth noting. After the passing away of the Paramahansa in August 1886, Narendranath² assumed the responsibility of bringing together his fellow disciples into a Brotherhood. One night the disciples got together for meditation around a fire. "The stars sparkled overhead and the stillness was unbroken except for the crackling of the firewood. Suddenly Naren opened his eyes and began, with an apostolic fervour, to narrate to the brother disciples the life of Christ. He exhorted them to live like Christ, who had no place 'to lay his head.' Inflamed by a new passion, the youths, making God and the sacred fire their witnesses, vowed to become monks. When they had returned to their rooms in a happy mood someone found out that it was Christmas Eve."³

Vivekananda's exhortation to his fellow disciples shows the method of the mission he had in mind for the new order of monks. He was aware of the history of the beginnings of the Christian Church, and the way in which the disciples of Christ carried the message of their master all over the world. It appears that Vivekananda was determined to use the same method to spread his gospel and to check the influence of

¹Vivekananda, Complete Works, Vol. 1, p.(ix).

²Narendranath Datta, who took the name Swami Vivekananda later, did not take that name till his departure for America in 1893. Prior to that he assumed the names of Vividishananda and Satchidananda to conceal his identity from the public.

³Nikhilananda, Vivekananda, a Biography, New York, 1953, p.37 -

Christian missionaries in India: The Swami also believed that the picture of Christ could be absorbed by the Ramakrishna Movement in the same way as the "Master" (Ramakrishna) had realized him.⁴ This tacit recognition of Christ was another line in the banner of the Swami's universalism. His banner thus hoisted, he was never slow to criticize the Christian missionaries for their "intolerance" and "narrow-mindedness".

The Swami gave to his movement a more practical shape, when he returned from the West in 1897. "On May 1, 1897, Swami Vivekananda had established an association called the Ramakrishna Mission Association to unite the lay and monastic followers of the Master in a common organized effort for the service of humanity."⁵ The Ramakrishna Movement made remarkable progress within a few years of its founding and established centres not only in many parts of India but also in major centres of the Western world. The Swami's vision was to make Hinduism "aggressive", and the movement he founded inherited that vision. In this, the Ramakrishna Movement has more dynamism and public support than any other modern religious movements. "Of all the religious movements that have sprung up in India in recent times, there is none so faithful to our past and so full of possibilities for the future, so rooted in our national consciousness and yet so universal in outlook, and none so thoroughly representative of the religious spirit of India, as the movement connected with the names of Sri Ramakrishna and his disciple, Swami Vivekananda."

⁴V. C. Samuel, The Ramakrishna Movement, Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore, 1960, p.9.

⁵Swami Vireśvarananda, "The Ramakrishna Math and Mission", Prabuddha Bharata, 1963, Vol. 63, p.311.

anda."⁶ The Ramakrishna Movement, to its credit, is the pioneer in the field of education and philanthropic activities, among the various Hindu religious movements. The idea of organized service, which was something new to Hinduism, became one of the chief concerns with the Mission. There are several hospitals and dispensaries run by the Mission and they are called 'Sevashramas', or 'Homes of Service'. In the field of education, the Mission imitated the policies of the early Christian colleges in India. The educational institutions run by the Mission (in 1962) include three general colleges, eight technical colleges and several upper and lower primary schools.⁷ These institutions are used as a means of teaching the younger generation the spiritual values of Hinduism. They are taught to take pride in the cultural heritage of India and Hinduism. The theology of the Movement found fertile soil in the colleges, especially in the residential ones. As a result, there is a new generation of Hindus, who are convinced of the superiority of Hinduism. To them the Advaita Vedanta is the highest religion man has ever known.

Vivekananda's Influence on National Leaders. Vivekananda was not a politician by profession and he refused to lend his name to any political party. But we can discern his intense patriotism and cryptical political statements in many of his speeches. His new gospel was, in fact, a mixture of nationalism and Vedanta. Many a leader of the Indian national movement acknowledged his indebtedness to Vivekan-

⁶D. S. Sarma, Hinduism Through the Ages, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1961, p.117.

⁷Swami Vireśvarananda, op. cit., p.313.

anda. Mahatma Gandhi rendered public homage to the Swami in 1923 at Belur. "I have gone through his works very thoroughly, and after having gone through them the love that I had for my country became thousand-fold,"⁸ wrote Gandhi. We cannot take this statement at its face value, because it was given at a birthday celebration of the Swami. Still, it shows the Swami's influence on the Mahatma, as a patriot. Jawaharlal Nehru assessed the contribution of Vivekananda as follows: "Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present."⁹ In his autobiography, Nehru noted the place of the Swami in India's struggle for freedom. "Vivekananda and others, as well as the interest of Western scholars in our philosophies, gave us a measure of self-respect again and roused up our dormant pride in our past."¹⁰ So long as the Swami's influence was limited to what Nehru acknowledged, it was a healthy contribution to Indian nationalism.

There was another aspect to Vivekananda's nationalism, which, when it fell into the hands of reactionaries, became very harmful to the body politic of India. Once a group of young men came to seek his guidance in matters political. He gave them this advice. "Man-making is my mission of life. You try to translate this mission of mine into action and reality. Read Bankimchandra and emulate his desabhakti (patriotism) and Sanatanadharma (activities of the band of patriots depicted in Ananda

⁸Prabuddha Bharata, 1963, Vol. 63, p.170.

⁹J. Nehru, The Discovery of India, New York, J. Day, 1946, p.338.

¹⁰J. Nehru, Toward Freedom, New York, J. Day, 1941, p.270.

Math). Your duty should be service to motherland. India should be freed politically first."¹¹ The exhortation to read Bankimchandra was a clear example of the Swami's Hinduized nationalism.¹² His patriotism was on the same plane with that of Bankimchandra's in its emotional appeal. As we have seen above¹⁴ the Swami himself worshipped the motherland as the Mother. This might have been an influence of the cult of Durga or Kali, which was the popular religion of Bengal. But to deify one's patch of land is not genuine nationalism. It is mere 'idolatry of geography' to borrow a phrase from Rabindranath Tagore.

The 'idolatry of geography' became the creed of certain national leaders soon after the death of Vivekananda. Within the national move-

¹¹Quoted by R. C. Majumdar, The History and Culture of the Indian People, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965, Vol. 10, p.493 - 494.

¹²The central plot of Bankimchandra Chatterji's novel Ananda Math moves around a band of sannyasins called santans or children who left their hearth and home and dedicated their lives to the cause of their motherland. They worshipped their motherland as the Goddess Kali; they knew no other deity save the land of their birth, and no other religion except the service of their motherland. In their temple they placed three images of the Goddess Kali representing the motherland - Mother that was, great and glorious in her majestic grandeur; Mother that is, wretched and grovelling in the dust; and Mother that will be, in her pristine glory. The most famous part in the novel was the poem "Bande Mataram", ("Hail to the Mother",) which soon became the great Congress nationalist song throughout India. The country was the Mother, but not a defenseless female: "Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen, with her hands that strike and her swords of sheen."¹³ No doubt this highly emotional musical composition roused the patriotic sentiments of Indians, at a time when the nation was fighting for its freedom. At that time the national leaders, who had the vision of a secular India, did not realize the injury "Bande Mataram" inflicted on the secular nature of the freedom movement. It kept away many Muslims and Christians from the National Congress.

¹³William Theodore de Bary, Ed., Sources of Indian Tradition, Columbia University Press, New York, 1964, Vol. 2, p.159.

¹⁴Chapter 1, p.13.

ment, leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Aurobindo Ghose combined the Western ideas of patriotism and nationalism with the religious symbolism of Hinduism. Tilak joined hands with Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, in the programme of cow protection. "At both the popular and the more sophisticated levels, Tilak effectively invoked the spirit of a resurgent Hinduism to fight the nationalist cause, but at the inevitable cost of alienating the Muslims."¹⁵ Aurobindo did not hide his religious convictions in his speeches. To a Bombay audience he spoke: "Nationalism is not a mere political programme; Nationalism is a religion that has come from God; Nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live."¹⁶ He expressed his religio-nationalism still more strongly in an article entitled "The doctrine of passive resistance." "Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice and the Motherland, the goddess to whom we offer it; into the seven leaping tongues of the fire of the yajña we must offer all that we are and all that we have, feeding the fire even with our blood and lives and happiness of our nearest and dearest; for the Motherland is a goddess who loves not a maimed and imperfect sacrifice, and freedom was never won from the gods by a grudging giver."¹⁷ Vivekananda's influence on Aurobindo was well known. Romain Rolland wrote that he (Aurobindo) was the real intellectual heir of Vivekananda.¹⁸ In the Swami, Aurobindo saw the Messiah of India to

¹⁵ Donald Eugene Smith, India as a Secular State, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1963, p.90.

¹⁶ William Theodore de Bary, op. cit., p.176.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.175.

¹⁸ Romain Rolland, op. cit., p.499.

be.¹⁹

New Political Parties. The Hinduized nationalism of Vivekananda soon found its expression in the new political parties such as Hindu Maha Sabha, Ram Rajya Parishad, Bharatiya Jana Sangh and the like. These parties all had one thing in common: the militant Hindu nationalism of the late nineteenth century. Among these parties, the Hindu Maha Sabha is the oldest, formed by a group of zealous Hindus who were disenchanted with the Congress leadership's "appeasement of the Muslims". By 1933, the Maha Sabha broke with the Congress, and preferred to compromise with the British rather than with the Muslims.²⁰ After the partition and freedom of India in 1947, the Maha Sabha became more militant in its demand for the creation of Hindustan (Hindu state). The party was opposed to the secularism of the Congress and declared in its election manifesto that "the misconceived notion of secular democracy cannot inspire the masses" and that only the ideals of Hindu Rashtra are capable of doing this. "The Maha Sabha stands for establishing Hindu Raj in Bharat (India), with a form of government in accordance with Hindu conceptions of policy and economy."²¹ The argument of the Maha Sabha leaders was very simple. They said that India was divided on the basis of religion. Pakistan for Muslims and Hindustan for Hindus. Those who do not want to be Hinduized should leave Hindustan. In his presidential address of 1959, Professor Ram Singh went as far as to say that "every

¹⁹Haridas Mukherjee, Ed., Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics, Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1964, p.xxiv.

²⁰Donald Eugene Smith, op. cit., p.457.

²¹Quoted by Donald Eugene Smith, op. cit., p.461.

Christian or every Muslim in India is a disruptive force."²²

The Ram Rajya Parishad is another political party which is closely related to the Hindu Maha Sabha in its ideology. It is a party of regional significance, confined to Rajasthan in the main. The Parishad advocates the restoration of Rama raj or Divine Kingdom in India. It offers India a constitution based on Sanatana dharma - eternal principles of Hindism. The Parishad venerates the caste system more than all other new political parties do. The party is prepared to help the lower castes by entrusting the management of sanitary departments and the leather and hides trade to them.

In this connection we may note that Mahatma Gandhi also used the term Ram rajya. The Mahatma's nationalism had deep roots in religious faith and he frequently used religious terminology to explain the objectives of the nationalist movement. He hoped that in the future India would become Ram rajya, which to him was synonymous with a golden age of peace and prosperity. His concept of Ram rajya was far more universalistic than that which the Parishad advocates at present. However, one may say that Gandhi's religious terminology might have been an inspiration to these new political parties which advocate the establishment of a Hindu state in the sub-continent.

Of all the Hinduized political parties, only of the Jana Sangh can it be said that it has an All-India status and influence. The party was formed in 1951, under the leadership of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who was closely associated with the militant Hindu organization called Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Corps). Jana Sangh has

²²Ibid., p.462.

disclaimed any relation with the R. S. S. and has thrown open membership in it to all citizens irrespective of creed or sect. But the Jana Sangh gives evidence of antecedent communal connection with the R. S. S. and its political philosophy. According to Mookerjee's biographer Balraj Madhok, the R. S. S. leaders began to feel the need for a party which would reflect the ideas and ideals of the R. S. S. in a political sphere. Mookerjee was well aware of this feeling, and the Jana Sangh was founded with at least a tacit understanding that R. S. S. support would be forthcoming.²³ And the ideologies of the R. S. S. and Jana Sangh bear far too numerous parallels to be merely coincidental.

Like the other Hindu political parties, the Jana Sangh has a philosophy of race superiority, justification of caste svadharma, and the exaltation of India to a near supra-geographical, almost supernational, sacred, mystic "Motherland."²⁴ Even though the Sangh pay lip service to India's secularism, it has embarked on a policy of "nationalizing all non-Hindus by inculcating in them the ideal of Bharatiya culture."²⁵ The Sangh has openly declared in its "Principles and policy" that its objective is to rebuild India on the basis of Bharatiya samskrti (culture) and maryāda (custom). In its view, India as a nation should accept the four Purusharthas of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, which they hope will solve all the social and economic maladies of India. The Sangh has been in the front line leading agitations demanding the

²³Ibid., p.470.

²⁴Herbert Jai Singh, Ed., Indian Politics After Nehru, Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore, 1967, p.137.

²⁵Quoted from the Sangh's manifesto by D. E. Smith, op. cit., p. 471.

protection of cows and their progeny. The party also advocates the annulment of the division of India. Akhanda Bhārat (undivided India) is one of the slogans of the Jana Sangh.

The religio-nationalism Vivekananda preached had a direct bearing upon the policies of these new political parties. Their religious orientation was a logical development of the resurgence, of which the Swami was the pioneer. These parties, in their own ways, stand for the protection of certain values which he passionately taught.

Modern India considers Vivekananda to be a 'patriot-saint', who restored to India the faith that she had lost in herself and her destiny. He was also, in the words of K. M. Panikkar, "the first great thinker who forcibly preached a doctrine of change in social matters and since his time the opposition to the doctrine that society requires adjustment with changing times and that morals and dogmas have also to be critically examined in each generation has ceased to command general acceptance."²⁶

²⁶K. M. Panikkar, The Foundations of New India, Allen & Unwin, London, 1963, p.75.

CHAPTER VI

A CRITIQUE OF VIVEKANANDA'S CENTRAL IDEAS

In this study we have attempted to present the influences which shaped Vivekananda and his understanding and interpretation of Hinduism. Here we will attempt to evaluate his contributions to religious thought in general and to the resurgence of Hinduism in particular.

The Gospel of Hinduism. Vivekananda was the first Hindu who carried the message of Hinduism to the West. For centuries the Hindu had been prohibited by social laws from travelling abroad. The Swami had to overstep this social barrier, as Rammohan Roy did in the early part of the nineteenth century, right at the beginning of his mission. His mission to the West consisted in interpreting the teachings of the Vedas, in a language familiar to his hosts. The key-note of his teachings was a plea to accept the truths contained in all religions. He declared at the Parliament of Religions: "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth."¹ He exhorted the Parliament that the banner of every religion should be,

¹Vivekananda, Complete Works, Vol. 1, p.24.

"Assimilation and not Destruction", "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension". Commenting on the address of the Swami, the New York Herald concluded: "After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation (India)."² This comment revealed a lot about the impression Vivekananda created in the United States. This was also a source of great pride to every Hindu. In him, the Hindu saw the champion of his faith. C. Rajagopalachari expressed the sentiments of many Hindus when he said: "Vivekananda saved Hinduism in India and that was why he was born in the nineteenth century and shaped by Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna ... Hinduism arose from the grave as Jesus did."³

India had produced numerous saints and religious teachers, but it would be difficult to detect in their messages an appreciation of the present day problems of social life. Vivekananda, it may be said, was the first religious leader in India who infused social consciousness into the Indians. He rejected the fatalistic interpretations of Karma, and once chided the representative of a 'Cow Protection Society', who held that the famine in Central India was the result of their Karma. He told the 'Cow Protection Society' member: "Sir, I have no sympathy with such organizations which do not feel for man, which seeing before their eyes thousands of their famished brothers perishing from starvation do not care to save them by offering even a morsel of food but spend millions for the protection of birds and beasts."⁴ The Swami initiated organized

²Quoted by Edmund Perry, The Gospel In Dispute, Doubleday, New York, 1958, p.7.

³Prabuddha Bharata, Vol. 63, p.173.

⁴The Life of Swami Vivekananda, by His Eastern and Western Disciples, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1960, p.489.

social service and his love for the suffering led him to say "first bread and then religion." He said that we stuffed the poor too much with religion, when the poor fellows had been starving. He once wrote: "I am a Socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread. The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried - if for nothing else, for the novelty of the thing."⁵

There is some more evidence to suggest that in the early part of his life Narendra Nath entertained revolutionary ideas to remedy the ills of society. When his disciple Sister Nivedita associated herself with some revolutionaries of Bengal, the Swami made objections and was said to have made the following reply: "What has Nivedita done in politics? I have travelled all over India for organizing revolution, manufacturing guns etc. I have made friendship with Sir Hiram Maxim. But India is in putrefaction. So, I want a band of workers who would, as Brahmacharins, educate the people and revitalize the country."⁶

After the Swami's return from the West, he directed all his energies towards this end. At this phase of his life, the revolutionary in him was mellowed down and he encouraged neither drastic reform from above nor fight from below. To him, both were ruinous. He taught India that spirituality is her genius and it should permeate all aspects of her life. He said: "In India religious life forms the centre, the key-note of the whole music of national religious life; and if any nation

⁵Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 6, p.381 - 382.

⁶R. C. Majumdar, History of the Freedom Movement in India, Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1963, Vol. 1, p.494.

attempts to throw off its national vitality, the direction which has become its own through the transmission of centuries, that nation dies if it succeeds in the attempt ... To prevent this, you must all work through the vitality of your religion."⁷

Vivekananda, through his speeches and writings, restored self-confidence to the Indians and generated fresh hope and faith in the destiny of India. Pandit Nehru spoke about the Swami's contributions to this end in the following words: "He came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self-reliance and some roots in the past."⁸ The Swami declared with a Messianic fervour that the solution to the problems of India lay in the application of the Vedantic ideas, such as the divinity of the soul and oneness of the universe. He wanted India to prove to the world the efficacy of the Vedantic teachings. "Hence, he was convinced that the path of the redemption of the world lay in the redemption of India through the potency of the Vedantic culture."⁹ This was the great goal the Swami set for Hinduism and he devoted all his energies to accomplishing this goal. In this, modern Hinduism is more indebted to Vivekananda than to anyone else.

Religio - National Myths. To realize his goal, which was indeed too high, the Swami created several myths. The first among these myths was the unity of all religions. He attempted to discern a single core in all religions. In this he had the sanction of his 'Master', Ramakrishna. He preached that all religions are one; "they are but various

⁷Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 3, p.220.

⁸Jawaharlal Nehru, Discovery of India, J. Day, New York, 1946, p.338.

⁹Haridas Bhattacharya, ed., The Cultural Heritage of India, Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta, 1956, Vol. 4, p.719.

phases of One Eternal Religion."¹⁰ Ramakrishna, as we have seen, taught the unity of Hinduism and from that proceeded to teach the unity of all religions. To him all religions were different paths leading to the one goal, i.e. liberation or mukti. Ramakrishna's concern was with the practical aspects of religious life. He aimed at a harmonious relationship between the votaries of each religion, since all forms of religion were true and valid, each one should respect the others. The Swami, besides accepting this practical aspect, attempted to establish a philosophical principle behind the 'unity of all religions'. He called it 'the Ideal of a universal Religion', and this became one of the cardinal principles of the Swami's teaching. In this, it can be shown that he has been more indebted to the idealism of the West than to the Indian tradition, though one cannot find any references to this fact in the Swami's utterances. Idealist philosophers assert the reality of the 'idea' behind the particular. Our knowledge of a thing consists not in knowing the particular thing, but in apprehending the 'universal idea', (*ἰδέα* or *ἔκδη*), which gives reality to the particular. But we can never apprehend the 'universal idea', except through the particular. Vivekananda asserted the reality of the 'Ideal of a Universal Religion',¹¹ and thus subjected himself to the same criticisms which the idealists draw. Hocking's comments on 'idealism in religion' are very relevant here. He held the view that idealism in religion did not give sufficient credence to the "authoritative Object". "The salvation it offers men seems still to be, in effect, a salvation from the particular in the general, the

¹⁰See Chapter 1, p.10 - 11.

¹¹See p.37.

ideal: even though it names the concrete as its goal, it has not yet been able in this matter of religion to accomplish union with the concrete. It might seem that the idealist more than any other should appreciate the function of the positive and authoritative in religion; should know that only the individual can breed the individual, should know, then, that only the historic can bear fruit in history, so that when the pragmatic test comes, a religion which is but a religion in-general, a religion universal but not particular, a religion of idea, not organically rooted in passion, fact and institutional life must fail."¹²

Hendrik Kraemer might have been right when he said that the philosophical idea of the 'Essence of Religion' was a product of the eighteenth century variety of Natural Theology.¹³ This idea of 'One Eternal Religion' is no more seriously entertained as it does not stand the light of the history of religions. At the most what one can prove from a comparative study of religions is the existence of a religious consciousness in man. Granting that this religious consciousness is universal, it still expresses itself in a variety of concrete forms of religion and one form may be radically different from the other. If all the religions are various expressions of the One, how shall we account for their contradictions? Of course, there are certain common denominators, which in the ultimate analysis are purely external. If we attempt to discern one 'ideal' behind all religions on the basis of their externals, it will be like classifying a white cow and a white

¹²William Ernest Hocking, The Meaning of God in Human Experience, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1922, p.xi - xii.

¹³Hendrik Kraemer, Religion and the Christian Faith, Lutterworth Press, London, 1956, p.74.

swan under one species because of their external quality, viz. whiteness. In the light of this, the Swami's philosophy of the oneness of all religions would seem intellectually unacceptable, and would seem even naive.

The second myth Vivekananda created and perpetuated was the superiority of Hinduism. As far as our knowledge goes, Ramakrishna never asserted the superiority of Hinduism. Vivekananda as a great revivalist wanted to usher Hinduism into the twentieth century and to accomplish this goal the role of the myth maker became inevitable. In a sense he was the first to forcefully express the rising ethos of modern Hinduism and India. He imparted his personal pride and aggressiveness into Hinduism.¹⁴ He exhorted his countrymen: "Up India and conquer the world with your spirituality ... The only condition of national life, of awakened and vigorous national life is the conquest of the world by Indian thought."¹⁵ This and similar statements conceal the shock he experienced while stepping into modernity. To save his followers from this shock, he started preaching the superiority of Hinduism.

It was the Swami's conviction that Vedanta was the most rationalistic and scientific religion man has ever known.¹⁶ He had found Chris-

¹⁴Vivekananda was one of the proudest leaders Hinduism ever had. Once he told his fellow monks at Benares, "I am going away; but I shall never come back until I can burst on the society like a bomb, and make it follow me like a dog." Quoted by Romain Rolland, op. cit., p.244.

¹⁵Vivekananda, op. cit., p.277.

¹⁶See p.27 - 28.

tianity and Islam irrational because they accept the authority of their founders; also the former accepts the revelation in Christ and the latter the infallibility of the Koran. But he seemed not to have questioned the rationality of subscribing to the authority of the Vedas. In his own words, Śruti "is the last court of appeal in all our spiritual differences."¹⁷ The Vedas are the revealed word of God, and they are eternal as God is eternal.¹⁸ He never made it clear how this authority of the Vedas, and the claim of revelation, is rational as against the Christian and Mohammedan claims. The Swami also questioned the rational basis of those religions which were founded by persons whose historicity their votaries hold precious. The reason behind this is not apparent. It seems that his search for a "rational basis" for one's beliefs is something which he learnt from the empiricist philosophers of the West in his college days at Calcutta. He made some study of Western logic and philosophy at Scottish Church College, and this influence seemed to have stayed with him throughout.

Like all modern exponents of Hinduism, Vivekananda emphasized the Indian concept of tolerance of all religions. He preferred the notion of acceptance as against toleration. Every Hindu finds a reason for glorious pride in this teaching of Hinduism. But, when we closely examine this tolerance, we can see elements of intolerance in this claim. Those who do not agree with the doctrine that "all religions are branches of the same tree" and "all paths in which we wander are His" are often branded as religious fanatics. One who does not subscribe to the

¹⁷See p.30.

¹⁸Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 2, p.239.

Hindu view of religion also has a right to assert that religions are both like and unlike each other, and their differences are as important as their similarities. The Swami, who very often criticized Christianity and Islam for their exclusive claims, did not realize the logical contradictions in his own claims.

Some may find it difficult to agree that all religions are different paths leading to the same goal, and the philosophy behind this assertion is difficult to substantiate. D. G. Moses rightly questioned this. He asked: "Are not some of the paths in which man wanders essentially his own wilful making, the paths cut out by his insensate ambition, insatiable cupidity and avaricious greed? There are paths that lead away from God as there are paths that lead to God ... It is not true to say that, whatever may be the way, its ultimate destination is the heavenly city."¹⁹ The ways which lead to God should be consistent with his nature. In the tendency to tolerate all these paths, blind alleys as well as straight roads, there is an indifference to the authority of truth, as Kraemer pointed out, for the goal of religion is not truth but salvation. "Therefore this tolerance and (as it is often called) generous hospitality lacks, in the light of the problem of truth, real character, notwithstanding the atmosphere of urbanity it often creates. In India, it seems, the emphasis on the quest for truth has been imperceptibly shifted from truth to liberation, from satya to mukti, the subjective."²⁰

Another aspect of this toleration, which Vivekananda preached, is

¹⁹D. G. Moses, Religious Truth and the Relation Between Religions, C. L. S., Madras, 1950, p.102.

²⁰Hendrik Kraemer, op. cit., p.112 - 113.

the synthetic absorption of other religious systems into the fold of Hinduism. His treatment of Buddhism can be cited as an example. Buddha, who revolted against Hinduism, and Vedanta in particular, has been portrayed as a great teacher of the Vedas. He said: "He (Buddha) preached the most tremendous truths. He taught the very gist of the philosophy of the Vedas to one and all without distinction."²¹ The Swami went as far as asserting that the Vedanta philosophy is the foundation of Buddhism.²² One cannot say this without contradicting Sankaracarya. One of the major burdens of Sankaracarya's writings was to prove the heresy of Buddhism and to defend Hinduism from the onslaught of the latter. We do not see any philosophical or historical justification behind the Swami's interpretation of Buddha and Buddhism. The same spirit of absorption was at work when he spoke of Jesus Christ as an Advaitin. "But we find the best and greatest men that have been born in the world have worked with that high impersonal idea (Advaita Vedanta). It is the Man who said, 'I and my Father are One', whose power has descended into millions."²³ This is a very difficult statement to substantiate from the life and teachings of Christ.

The Swami based his claim for the superiority of Hinduism mainly in its 'acceptance' of other religions and the 'scientific spirit' of its approach.²⁴ In his thinking, only Hinduism had the potentiality to meet the spiritual needs of the world. In this he was not governed by

²¹Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 8, p.97.

²²Ibid., Vol. 5, p.97.

²³Ibid., Vol. 2, p.142.

²⁴See p.39 - 40.

any philosophical insight. He was not able to rise above the spectacle of nationalism. Nationalism was the very marrow of his religion. The following utterance is a clear example of his myth of the religio-national superiority of Hinduism: "Everything looks propitious, and Indian thought, philosophical and spiritual, must once more go over and conquer the world. The problem before us, therefore, is assuming larger proportions every day. It is not only that we must revive our own country - that is a small matter; I am an imaginative man - and my idea is the conquest of the whole world by the Hindu race."²⁵ This phase of his mission, that has been termed the 'evangelism of aggressive Hinduism' by Sister Nivedita,²⁶ maimed the spirit of the universalism he tried to preach.

In preparing Hinduism to meet the challenges of modernity, Vivekananda tried to extract out of Hinduism a singleness of vision, clarity and boldness of purpose. He succeeded in some of the practical aspects of his mission. Radhakrishnan was acknowledging this when he said "Vivekananda's life and teachings prepared us for the new age of freedom in which we live."²⁷ The Swami got into logical difficulties when he tried to build up a philosophical base for his work. As we have seen above, he had a great concern for the suffering masses of India. The Vedanta, particularly in the Advaita form, does not offer a framework for such a concern. But the Swami set out to establish a Vedantic ethic for organ-

²⁵Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 3, p.276.

²⁶Haridas Bhattacharyya, ed., op. cit., p.725.

²⁷S. Radhakrishnan, Occasional Speeches and Writings, Govt. of India Publications Division, Delhi, 1957, p.285.

ized service. He asserted that "only the Hindus have a rationale for service. "Man must love others, because those others are himself. There is but one." The oneness an Advaitin realizes in Brahman alone, "is the rationale of all ethics and spirituality."²⁸ This type of reasoning, one may say, has no historical validity. It is importing new ideas into the Vedanta.

The Swami often divided human beings into clear types on the basis of their mental makeup. He saw four types of men: the active, the emotional, the intellectual, and the introspective. To each of these types he prescribed a particular type of yoga for realizing the ultimate goal. This division of men into types is too simplistic. Such a division stands on very weak psychological foundations. Again, to assign religious disciplines to each one according to his needs is too artificial. Real religion should demand the total commitment of the total person. Demanding work from certain persons and devotion from certain others and so on, will not provide a conducive milieu for the development of integrated personalities. It is not clear from the type of division the Swami made, what place there is for unused faculties of men in their religious life.

Vivekananda's attitude towards other religions was determined by his attempts to reform Hinduism and to make it a religion acceptable to modern man. Non-dualism was the crown of all religious developments. He placed all other religions in the category of 'dualistic religions', and therefore stand below Vedantic religion. The result was that his visions of universalism ended in a reactionary particularism. He

²⁸ See p.29.

rejected the universalistic aspects of other religions in so far as they did not contribute to his idea of religion.

The Swami always spoke of the West as 'materialistic' and of the East as 'spiritualistic'. This was a myth created by the romanticising orientalist of the nineteenth century, and Vivekananda gave classical expression to it more than any other Indian. Max Müller was the first European scholar who discovered 'a spiritual home' for the world in India. He said: "If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow, I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered the problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them ... I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we ... may draw that correction which is most wanted to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not only for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life - again I should point to India."²⁹ This kind of statement from European scholars was soothing to Indians and soon the notion of the all-embracing spirituality of India became a powerful defense mechanism in the hands of the latter-day prophets of Hinduism. The Swami's respect for orientalist like Max Müller and Paul Deussen knew no bounds. He said: "The greater is the glory, therefore, to Max Müller and to Deussen for their bold and open advocacy of truth."³⁰ One has a right to take pride in the ancient glory

²⁹Max Müller, India: What It Can Teach Us? Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1883, p.24.

³⁰Vivekananda, op. cit., Vol. 4, p.277.

of one's land. But to judge other nations in the light of one's own past glory and spirituality is not fair. The myth of the spiritual East is self-flattering and self-defeating at the same time.

Swami Vivekananda set a great goal for India and Hinduism. He tried to find new bases for Hinduism to meet the demands of the new age. In this his success was partial. His importance is not as a religious philosopher but as a prophet of neo-Hinduism and as a revivalist. He came with the message, "awake, and stop not till the goal is reached", and it captured the imagination of India. The liberation he brought to Hinduism was partial and of an equivocal character, because of the inherent nature of the system he adopted. Nevertheless, he spent all his energies in attempting to forge a single body politic out of the diversity and decadence of Hinduism. He liberated Hinduism from its inferiority complex and lethargic attitude to life. At the same time he seemed to have imposed many prohibitions, subtle though they be, upon the intrinsic movements of intellectual enquiry. The new myths of religio-national superiority which he freely manufactured, as we have seen, became barriers in the pursuit of truth. They marked the upper limits of the freedom available for intellectual enquiry. Thus, to accept the freedom he offered would also entail an unfreedom that came with it. His strength as well as weakness lay in his synthetic method. This method succeeded in uniting Hinduism, but failed in establishing it as a universal religion, "the only religion that can have any hold on any intellectual people."³¹

³¹Ibid., Vol. 2, p.139.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barrows, John Henry, ed. The World's Parliament of Religions. Chicago: Parliament Publishing, 1893.
- Bary, William Theodore de, ed. Sources of Indian Tradition. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964.
- Bennett, Charles A. The Dilemma of Religious Knowledge. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931.
- Bhattacharyya, Haridas, ed. The Cultural Heritage of India. 2nd ed. Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1956.
- Bhattacharya, Siddhesvara. The Philosophy of the Srimad-Bhagavata. Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati, 1960.
- Bose, Narayan. Social Thinking of Swami Vivekananda. Lucknow: Bina Bose, 1963.
- Bose, Subhas Chandra. The Indian Struggle. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964.
- Burke, Marie Louise. Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries. 1st ed. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1958.
- Collet, Sophia Dobson. The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy. 3rd ed. Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1962.
- Diwakar, R. R. Paramahansa Sri Ramakrishna. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1964.
- Eliade, Mircea. Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return. Translated from French by Willard R. Trask. New York: Harper & Row, 1959.
- Enguly, Manomohan. The Swami Vivekananda: A Study. Calcutta: Contemporary Publishers, 1962.
- Ghose, Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics. 1st ed. Calcutta: Mukhopadhyay, 1964.

- Gupta, Mahendranath. Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. Translated by Swami Nikhilananda. Mylapore: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1964.
- Hocking, William Ernest. The Meaning of God in Human Experience. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922.
- , Living Religions and a World Faith. London, Allen & Unwin, 1940.
- Isherwood, Christopher. Ramakrishna and His Disciples. London: Methuen & Co., 1965.
- Isherwood, Christopher, ed. Vedanta for Western World. New York: Viking Press, 1962.
- James, William. The Varieties of Religious Experience. 1st ed. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1912.
- King, Winston L. Introduction to Religion. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954.
- Kraemer, Hendrik. Religion and Christian Faith. London: Lutterworth Press, 1956.
- Life of Sri Ramakrishna, The. Compiled from various authentic sources. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964.
- Life of Swami Vivekananda, The. By his Eastern and Western disciples. 6th ed. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960.
- Mahabharata.Bhagavad-gita. The Bhagavad Gita. Translated by S. Radhakrishnan. London: Allen & Unwin, 1948.
- Majumdar, R. C. History of the Freedom Movement in India. Calcutta: Mukhopadhyay, 1962.
- Majumdar, R. C., ed. The History and Culture of the Indian People. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965.
- Mission of Our Master. By Eastern and Western disciples of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. 1st ed. Madras: E. A. Natesan & Co. (n.d.)
- Mookerji, Radha Kumud. Nationalism in Hindu Culture. 2nd ed. Delhi: S. Chand, 1957.
- Moore, Charles A., ed. The Indian Mind. Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture. Honolulu: East West Centre Press, 1967.
- Moses, David Gnanaprakasam. Religious Truth and the Relation Between Religions. Madras: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1950.

- Miller, Frederick Max. India: 'What Can It Teach Us. New York: Funk & Wagnall, 1883.
- , Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899.
- , Vedanta Philosophy. 1st ed. Calcutta: Susil Gupta, 1955.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal. The Discovery of India. New York: John Day, 1946.
- , Toward Freedom: The Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru. New York: John Day, 1941.
- Nihkilananda, Swami. Vivekananda: A Biography. New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1953.
- Noble, Margaret E. The Master as I Saw Him, Being Pages from the Life of Swami Vivekananda. By his disciple Nivedita. ... Of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1930.
- Pandit, M. P. Kundalini Yoga: A Brief Study of Sir John Woodroffe's 'The Serpent Power'. 3rd ed. Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1968.
- Panikkar, Kavalam Madhava. The Foundations of New India. London: Allen & Unwin, 1963.
- , Hindu Society at Cross-roads. 3rd ed. London: Asia Publishing House, 1961.
- Patanjali. How to Know God. The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali. 1st ed. Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1968.
- Perry, Edmund. The Gospel In Dispute: The Relation of Christian Faith to Other Missionary Religions. 1st ed. New York: Doubleday, 1958.
- Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. Occasional Speeches and Writings. Delhi: Government of India Publications Division, 1957.
- Rao, Nagaraja P. Introduction to Vedanta. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960.
- Rolland, Romain. The Prophets of New India. Translated by E. F. Malcolm-Smith. London: Cassell & Co., 1930.
- Samuel, V. C. Ramakrishna Movement: The World Mission of Hinduism. Bangalore: Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1960.
- Sankaracarya. Sri Sankara's Teachings in His Own Words. Edited by Swami Atmananda. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1964.

Saradananda, Swami. Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master. Translated by Swami Jagadananda. 3rd ed. Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1963.

Sarma, D. S. Hinduism Through The Ages. 2nd ed. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962.

-----, Studies in the Renaissance of Hinduism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Benares: Benares Hindu University, 1944.

Satprakashananda, Swami. Methods of Knowledge: Perceptual, Non-perceptual, and Transcendental. London: Allen & Unwin, 1965.

Sharma, Ram Nath. Essentials of Indian Philosophy. Kanpur: Oriental Publishing House, 1965.

Singh, Herbert Jai, ed. Indian Politics After Nehru. Bangalore: Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1967.

Sinha, Jadunath. A History of Indian Philosophy. Calcutta: Sinha Publishing House, 1956.

Smith, Donald Eugene. India as a Secular State. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.

Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. The Meaning and End of Religion. New York: New American Library, 1964.

Vivekananda, Swami. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1959 - 1963.

Wood, Ernest E. Practical Yoga: Ancient and Modern. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1948.

Woodroffe, Sir John. The Serpent Power: Being the Sat-Cakra-Nirupana and Paduka-Pancaka. 7th ed. Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1954.